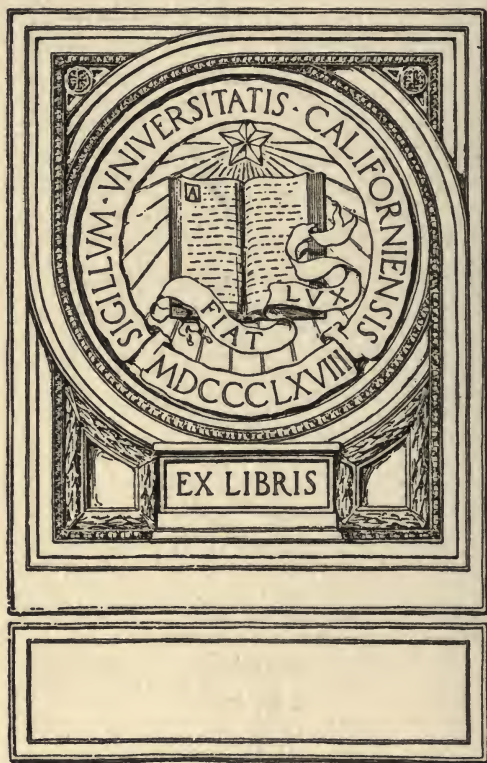


BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE



WALTER HALE





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

**BY MOTOR TO THE
FIRING LINE**



Scouting, Aisne Valley
(Afternoon, June 30th, 1915)

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

AN ARTIST'S NOTES AND SKETCHES
WITH THE ARMIES OF NORTHERN
FRANCE :: :: JUNE-JULY, 1915

BY
WALTER HALE

*WITH DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY THE AUTHOR*



LIBRARY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.

1916

D640

H27

Copyright, 1915, 1916, by
THE CENTURY CO.

Copyright, 1916, by
P. F. COLLIER & SON, INC.

Published, April, 1916

TO THE
LIBRARY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

TO OWEN JOHNSON IN APPRECIATION
OF HIS LOYALTY THIS VOLUME IS
GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED BY
THE AUTHOR

359933

FOREWORD

BEFORE the reader plunges into the following pages, it is only fair to warn him that the author's first effort as a war-correspondent was an unqualified failure. This was not alone the author's fault, since—though he be ever so ambitious—one cannot succeed as a war-correspondent unless there be a war to correspond about. The scene of this fruitless endeavor was on the Venezuelan coast at the time when certain of the European nations sent fleets to the Spanish Main in an effort to collect sums of money, long overdue, from the Castro government. Germany, the most aggressive of the Powers involved, had threatened to land marines on Venezuelan soil. The violation of the Monroe Doctrine could lead to only one eventuality. In anticipation of this, correspondents representing the leading journals of the United States and Europe gathered at La Guayra and Caracas, restlessly awaiting the commencement of hostilities, like chargers on the eve of battle.

But, for a very good reason—and that's another story—Germany did not land marines on Vene-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

zuelan soil. The blockade was lifted and one by one the correspondents drifted back home to engage in more peaceful pursuits until the Russo-Japanese War again called them into action.

If we who went to the Spanish Main found no war to write about, the correspondents who for some eighteen months have made Paris their headquarters have been within a few hours' journey of the greatest general actions in history with only an occasional limited permit to view their various phases. The old-time freedom of the war correspondent has not only been curbed—it has been taken away from him and checked among the musty archives of the War Office. And with the withdrawal of many of his privileges, he has lost something of his former "camaraderie." The men I knew in Venezuela were working together in perfect harmony; if one was granted an interview or secured an important bit of information, he shared the story with the others.

In the Great War, the tendency has been—in many instances—to beat out the other fellow, to be the first to reach a beleaguered city or to visit a certain battleground or to explore exposed trenches close to the enemies' lines. As a matter of fact, since the correspondents usually visit the front in parties of from two to five, it is almost impossible

FOREWORD

to obtain an exclusive story and I am reasonably sure that no privileges are extended to one group that are withheld from another. The War Office sends them into the same general positions, but the War Office cannot discount the element of chance. There are some men upon whom fate smiles and for them what commenced as a good imitation of a glorified Cook's Tour may be turned at the psychological moment into a vivid and dramatic experience. Bombardments have a habit of starting at unexpected times and places and certain staff officers are more lenient than others about escorting their charges into dangerous salients.

Once at the front, chance rather than privilege plays the more important part in affording the correspondent opportunities.

For example, as I looked out over the Aisne valley from a château east of Rheims there was only an occasional puff of white or yellow smoke in the distance to suggest that anything unusual was occurring in this wide stretch of peaceful landscape. Seven weeks later, another correspondent, standing in the same position, would have seen the same plain torn up by shrapnel and shell and echoing the thunder of thousands of guns as black masses of men rocked through the valley in the great Champagne offensive—the bitterest fighting in the west-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

ern area since the Marne up to the launching of the present drive at Verdun.

At Béthany those of our party who went into the trenches would not have had to work their way out under a salvo from the German lines had not a captive balloon been aloft for observation at the moment when their motor car pulled up in the distance behind a clump of trees.

Again, although our *autorisation* for the Artois sector included a visit to Arras, I am sure that in the face of an unusually heavy bombardment we would not have been permitted to enter the town except that a fortunate drizzle of rain hid from view objects approaching over the roads raked by the German artillery. This same mist made possible our visit to Blangy, where the Germans occupied one corner of the brewery and the French all the rest of the same building and the lines were probably closer together than at any other point from the Vosges to the Channel.

It was because of an early morning haze clinging close to the ground that we made our interesting excursion over the battle-scarred hillside of Notre Dame de Lorette. It was because we were temporarily in charge of an intrepid officer who stretched to the utmost limit the bounds of his authority that we were allowed to crawl over the face

FOREWORD

of the hill into the trenches just captured from the Germans on the *grand éperon*. At this juncture, as the haze lifted beneath a hot sun, a certain head was not ducked far enough below the crumpled parapets to escape the watchful German observers and we had to make our way back to the bomb-proofs within the French lines through a steady shower of projectiles.

Thus, on a few occasions, opportunity knocked at the door for us.

Months later, as I think of Notre Dame, I am reminded of the men I met there in the trenches. During the excursion over the hillside I took many photographs of the *poilus* and after my return to New York I mailed proofs to them. In each case an interesting post card or letter came in acknowledgment. With three of the men who had been in our personal escort, and to whom I sent also newspapers and magazines, I kept up a correspondence. One by one their letters ceased. The last—written after the desperate battles for the possession of Souchez and Givenchy—came from a private in a mitrailleuse company of the 26th Brigade. It described how he escaped injury by a miracle under the guns about the sugar mill. It spoke of the splendid courage and élan of his regiment. It added that all but one of the officers we had known

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

had come through the various actions in safety. Captain Pierre, whose photograph is one of my illustrations, had fallen while leading his men across a shell-swept area near Ablain St. Nazaire.

I have deceived my reader if he believes the purpose of this introduction is to show wherein opportunity comes to the few correspondents in the Great War and overlooks the many. Nor am I writing it to beg his indulgence because the pages that follow—instead of reflecting the viewpoint of a strategist or the experienced writer of fiction—are rather the impressions of an illustrator who has spent the happiest days of his life motoring in France.

It has been written that I might pay a little tribute to the memory of the men I knew on the Notre Dame de Lorette hillside—the men whose letters no longer come to me.

W. H.

New York, March 3, 1916.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A VOYAGE OF ADVENTURE	3
II. A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES	16
III. A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS AND THE CHAMPAGNE DISTRICT .	47
IV. IN THE AISNE VALLEY	71
V. SOISSONS—A RETROSPECT	91
VI. A LITTLE JOURNEY TO COMPIEGNE	106
VII. THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS	121
VIII. BACK OF THE FRONT—DOULLENS AND ALBERT	155
IX. ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR	177
X. AFTERWARD—MOTORING IN THE PATH OF WAR	222

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE AUTHOR'S DRAWINGS

Scouting—Aisne Valley. (Afternoon, June '30, 1915) . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	PAGE
The great doors, Rheims Cathedral	5
Bombardment of St. Jean des Vignes, Soissons	84
Effects of shell fire, Soissons Cathedral	93
The end of a cul-de-sac, Arras	128
An inn courtyard after bombardment, Arras	137
Notre Dame de Brebières, Albert	148
The Rue du Bourg, Doullens	157
Shrapnel and shell, Bois de Bouvigny, July 8th	196
Sketch map of the Artois sector	202-3
A modern battle-field	209
Jouy St. Servins	248
The ruined church at Ribécourt	257

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

	PAGE
The <i>Espagne</i> coming up the Gironde	14
Cuirassiers in the procession escorting the remains of Rouget de l'Isle, Paris	19
Army chauffeurs at Epernay—June 26	26
The tree bordered Marne canal	31
Automobile commissary train, Champagne district. (Photo by French Government)	38
An artilleryman watering his horse in a village back of the front in the Aisne valley	43
At staff headquarters in the Aisne valley	50
Entrance to the deserted Château Fère d'Isly	55
Staff motor car with wire cutting apparatus. (Photo by French Gov- ernment)	62
Watching effect of salvo from French "75's." Artillery position in the Aisne valley—June 28	67
French war plane in a wheat field of the Champagne district	74
Heavy artillery en route to the front. (Photo by French Government)	79
A motor mitrailleuse. (Photo by French Government)	98
Pontoon bridge across the Oise at Compiègne	103
Protecting with sandbags the Porte de la Vierge Dorée, Amiens Cath- edral	118
Our motors held up by shell fire, Route Nationale between Arras and Doullens—July 7	123
Motor car destroyed by a shell, Arras. (Photo by French Government)	162
Effects of shell fire and explosive bombs over the great portals of Arras Cathedral	167
A motor car destroyed by shell fire in the ruins of the Hôtel de Ville, Arras—July 7	174
A snapshot from the garret of the brewery at Blangy. The German lines are 60 yards away in the ditch between the ruined outbuild- ings	179

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

	PAGE
Movement of an army division by motor transport through Doullens— morning of July 9	186
A battery of "75's" passing through Avesnes-le-Comte	191
Waiting to run the gauntlet across the zone of German fire on the Bou- vigny plateau	214
The modern dispatch bearer, the "Baby Peugeot" that takes the place of the old time orderly on his dashing steed	219
First line French trenches advanced position 11.40 A. M.—July 8. Notre Dame de Lorette	226
Battle-field of Notre Dame de Lorette, showing effects of big gun fire on trees and ploughed up earth	231
Fox terrier and her puppies born under the fire of French and German guns in the Spahi position	238
A New York chauffeur in a block house near Ablain St. Nazaire— July 8	243
German prisoner and his captor near Ablain St. Nazaire	262
Our Renault trapped	267
<i>Poilus</i> back of the lines in the Artois sector waiting for dusk to take their places at the front	274
French post cards	279

**BY MOTOR TO THE
FIRING LINE**



BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

CHAPTER I

A VOYAGE OF ADVENTURE

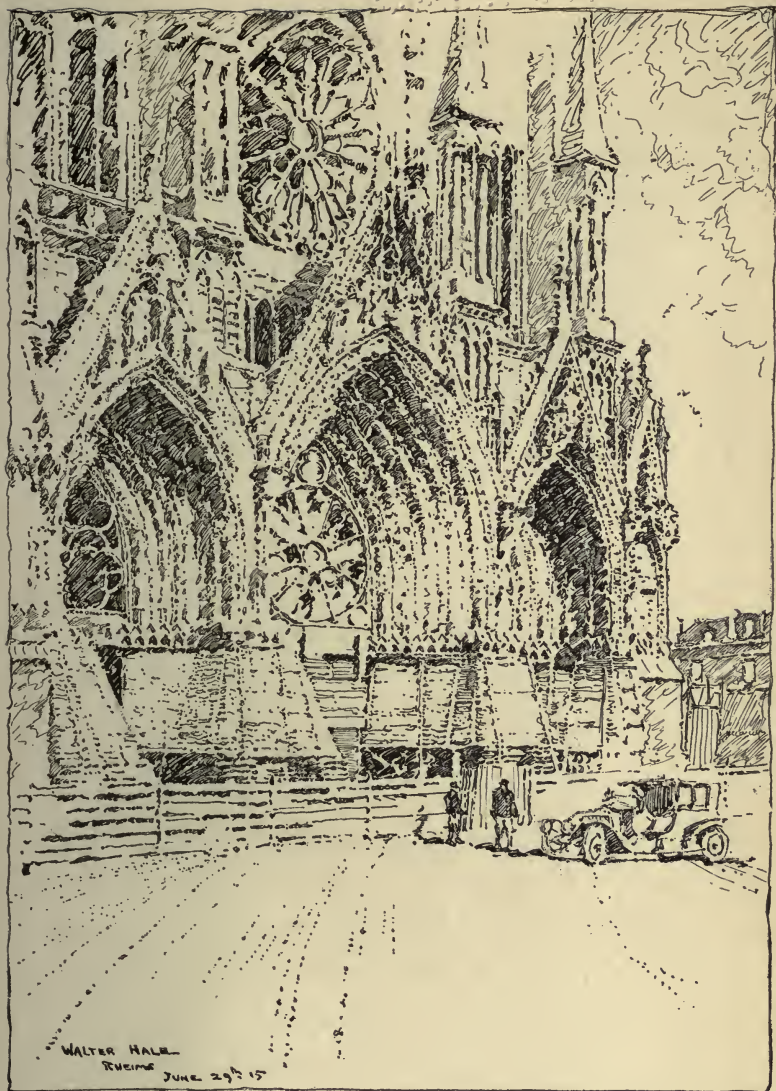
ON our arrival in France we would not go up to the front by the ordinary methods of transportation. We would go up in a motor—my motor. The scheme from its inception had the advantage of simplicity. We would ship the car to Bordeaux. From there we would have no trouble reaching the various points along the line that stretches from the Vosges to the Channel. From Saint-Dié I planned to nibble my way eastward, up to the front and back again, up to the front and back again. Thus we would have a look in at the forts about Verdun, at Saint-Mihiel, the Argonne district, Rheims, the Aisne Valley, Soissons, Compiègne, Arras, and the famous Artois sector about Notre Dame de Lorette. We would be armed with the proper passports, magazine credentials, touring-club membership

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

cards and letters from influential Americans. Owen Johnson, the literary half of the expedition, had been educated in Paris and had many friends in the army and among the leaders of the new ministry. I had had some years' experience motoring in France and knew well most of the highways and byways along the battle front.

The scheme seemed feasible. But it had hardly gone beyond the preparatory stages before the skids were applied to it. Our plans were not altered by the conflicting advice of numerous friends. If I listened to them, I would not send my car to Bordeaux. I would send it to Marseilles instead. I would not take it abroad at all, but would rent one, with a military chauffeur, in Paris. Or again, it were best not to depend on a motor; the war in the western area had settled down to a long siege in fixed positions, and we could easily reach the front by either train or taxicab. Why, they were even running motor-bus excursions from Paris to the ruins of Senlis, where the German drive was checked on the eve of the Battle of the Marne!

We thought we knew more about all these things than our friends. But our confidence was jarred somewhat by the stories of returned travelers.



The Great Doors, Rheims Cathedral

1880

A VOYAGE OF ADVENTURE

From them it appeared that although the Touring Club of France was exploiting a propaganda in England showing the attractions of southern France for motorists, it was no simple matter to make your way about even as far away from the battle lines as Burgundy, Touraine, Gascony, and Provence. For foreigners to motor with any freedom in the northern provinces, with every main road and every lane guarded by Territorials, was out of the question.

I called up the French Line, and any lingering doubt in my mind was set at rest. It would cost nearly \$400, or over twice as much as in peace times, to carry my car across the ocean. So I drove it down to the dead storage building and tucked it away for the summer.

Knowing what I did of freight rates, I was surprised to find so many crated motors on the pier. But they were trucks and ambulances consigned to the French army. And at adjoining piers, in place of the graceful liners of the White Star and Compagnie Générale Transatlantique was a nondescript fleet of battle-scarred tramps loading other crated trucks and dismembered aeroplanes consigned to Petrograd, Havre, London, and Genoa. Who ever

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

heard of a ship in New York Harbor that boasted Rouen as her home port? Yet here was *Le Coq* of Rouen, a rusty-sided thick-bellied hooker that had probably never before been more than two hundred miles beyond the mouth of the Seine. She had come in light with her propeller well exposed above the water line; she would go out loaded to the gun-wales with a cargo capable of blowing the adjoining wharves and shipping higher than the Woolworth tower.

There was an undercurrent of excitement on the *Espagne* as we neared the French coast. It was a gusty night, with banks of heavy clouds rushing across the sky and occasional shafts of light on the horizon from a lighthouse or a protecting cruiser. In the smoke room, with the incandescent globes dimmed, the ports closed, and a woman in the adjoining salon still wearing the life belt in which she had appeared at dinner, we were not to lose sight of the utility of the motor-driven vehicle in the present war. At the time it was quite as interesting a subject as any other. Out of the mass of figures and details that floated through the hazy atmosphere I gathered that a story current at the time we sailed was untrue.

A VOYAGE OF ADVENTURE

The average life of a horse in the army was not one week. It was considerably longer. The average term of service of a motor truck at the front was not three weeks, but the vehicle would continue on the job as long as they cared to give it attention. The speaker was a manufacturer from the West who had sold two hundred chassis to the French Government shortly after the outbreak of the war. He said that more trucks were in the repair shop through incompetent or reckless driving than as a result of shell fire. Of his large consignment not more than a dozen had been severely damaged by the German artillery and only one so completely wrecked that it had to be scrapped.

There were no taxicabs waiting on the quay at Bordeaux to whisk us up to the hotel. In fact, there were no cabs of any kind waiting on the quay. A mysterious wireless message received on board the night before made things easy for us with the officials. Johnson was thereby enabled to catch the "*Rapide*" for Paris while I remained behind to pass our luggage through the customs and send it to the station. This done, I looked in vain for a taxi or a cab. I hailed a bus marked "Service de Ville," but it was engaged. Then I stopped an electric car.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

The conductor was a woman in black, and she was very businesslike. It occurred to me that if taxis were so scarce in Bordeaux we might have some difficulty in renting an automobile in Paris.

Early in the morning, as we had come up the Garonne past the famous vineyards of the Médoc I had noticed files of German prisoners at work under guard in the shipyards and fields. At Bordeaux four women out of five were in mourning, young men were conspicuous by their absence, and the brilliantly lighted cafés on the Allées de Tourny closed at half past ten at night.

The next day, as I looked out of the windows of the Paris express, I thought that the countryside of France never looked more peaceful, the landscape more smiling and prosperous.

A little later we passed a hospital train at Libourne. A second train rattled into the station just as we were pulling out. The seriously wounded were lying on stretchers hung in the third-class carriages, those less dangerously hurt sitting at the windows or standing on crutches in the open doors—everywhere white bandages and slings, heads swathed in lint, bodies tossing uneasily on the narrow cots. A smell of ether and antiseptics pervaded

A VOYAGE OF ADVENTURE

the station. In the center of each train was a dark-green carriage with sterilizing plant, operating room, and X-ray motor, "The gift of Baroness——" lettered in white on the outside. Two long trainloads of broken humanity, the harvest of one day's operations in a sector of the battle line! The war was being brought closer to me.

As we traveled on it was evident that private motor cars had been to a large extent swept off the roads of France. This was all familiar country. It was with a real feeling of emotion that I gazed on that long, white highway, deserted now except for an occasional cart or a few black specks where a group of peasant women were returning from the fields. This was *route nationale* No. 10—many times had I driven over it on my way from Paris to the Pyrenees. And I fancied I could hear through the clatter of trucks on the rails the rhythmic purr of the motor as my car swept on through long avenues of trees.

Angoulême passed, where were quartered many troops in peace times. I recollected driving through its narrow streets in the twilight when red-legged *piou-pious* were so plentiful that they seemed to hop up out of the chinks between the cobbles. They are

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

bearded *poilus* now, with sterner lines in their faces and a look in their eyes one never forgets. At Poitiers I was reminded of the horrible little hotel across from the Gare wherein I passed an unhappy night. Red Cross nurses and boy scouts ("boy scoots" the French call them) were in the station waiting with trays of fruit and sandwiches for a trainload of wounded shortly due.

At a little station nearing Tours a group of soldiers in full marching equipment were waiting to entrain for the north. Stuck in their caps or held in their hands were nosegays of wild flowers. A little Cuban girl in my compartment leaned out of the window. "Tuéz les boches!" she cried. They smiled and waved their nosegays as the train crawled on.

We were now in the valley of the Loire, in Balzac's sunny province of Touraine. That other deserted ribbon of road to the right is *route nationale* No. 152, that runs through the Châteaux country westward to the ancient Province of Anjou. A flood of motor memories swept over me. At Tours Robert Lorraine, before he had become famous as an aviator and been wounded while serving his country in Flanders, had dashed proudly up



The *Espagne* coming up the Gironde

A VOYAGE OF ADVENTURE

to the hotel doorway in his little runabout. At Amboise, under the shadow of the ancient castle that rears its walls above the shimmering river, I had worked part of a night over a recalcitrant feed pipe. At Chaumont we had climbed up through the rain to the château and stumbled into the presence of a royal personage from England. Blois, Chambord, Beaugency, Orléans—each historic place had for me some intimate recollection of the friends with whom I had toured in France. Ah, *mes amis!* I thought of you, and I wondered if we would ever live any of these days over again after the country that we loved with a real affection had emerged triumphant from the greatest crisis in her history.

CHAPTER II

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

UNIFORMS of blue and red and black with gold braid were more than usually conspicuous in the surging crowd at the Gare d'Orléans when we arrived in Paris. There were more women in black on the station platform and a dearth of taxi autos in the rank outside. A private motor drawn up at the curb was lost among low gray machines with an army number in white on the bonnet. No, while the station and quai beyond took on a familiar appearance, the Paris of this evening was not the same Paris of many other June evenings in less eventful years.

All the taxicabs had been commandeered by the time I had collected our various trunks and parcels. The driver of the horse-drawn vehicle that fell to my lot knew naught of the Hotel Meyerbeer. *Le vieux Parisien* this, a cabby of the old type—bulbous nose, glazed hat, red vest and a horse that supported himself unsteadily on his underpinnings.

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

He—the driver—was a relic of the old slow-moving days before the era of the taxi auto. The war had brought him and his spavined steed back to life again. The cloud that swept before it the young chauffeur and his little motor passed him by—a derelict. Rejuvenated he was again roaming the streets that had been his in another generation.

To my faulty pronunciation I blamed the fact that he could not understand my direction. I first called it the Hotel Meyerbeer. Then I tried it a number of ways—Meyarbare, Meerbeer, Mayerbeer—and to all he shook his head. I was about to go to another hotel and let Johnson find me with the aid of the police when a *cocher* in the gathering multitude remembered that the name had been changed to the Hotel Alexandre III.

After effecting a junction with my advance guard at the hotel I learned that at the beginning of the war, in the first rage against everything German in name—streets, plays, wines, individuals, merchant houses—Meyerbeer had flaunted his Teutonic patronymic above the chestnut trees that encircle the Rond Point des Champs Elysées. The proprietor, although three of his sons had been

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

mobilized and were fighting with the French forces in Alsace and at the Marne, yielded to popular clamor and a new gilt sign appeared on his roof and a new name on the hotel stationery.

I am still wondering whether the old cabby could not understand my French or was merely too patriotic to carry a fare to a hotel with a German appellation.

On the first night in Paris—and for many nights thereafter—I was disturbed by a drumming, droning noise. It came out of the darkness, sometimes close to my bedroom window, sometimes high in the sky overhead. It was the throb of the aeroplanes over Paris. To guard against Zeppelins and the bomb-dropping Taubes of the early days of the war, a certain number of French aviators ascended at dusk each evening and patrolled to and fro over the city until daybreak.

I have been kept awake by various noises in my travels—by the clanging trolley cars of a middle western town, by the little hoot owls of the Tuscan hills, by the echoing footsteps in Waterport Street, Gibraltar, and by the shrill cries of the hawkers in Cadiz and Seville. But this insistent droning of the throbbing motors overhead was a new experi-



Cuirassiers in the procession escorting the remains of
Rouget de l'Isle, Paris

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

ence. I found myself watching for it. I finally became accustomed to it and it bothered me no more than the occasional honk honk of a taxi in the Champs Elysées or the restless hum just before dawn as the city stirs before it awakes.

The automobile agent in Paris to whom we had been referred was eager to rent us a car. With it, he thought, we might get as far as Versailles, Versailles being distant from Paris about eight miles. We found later from those in authority that we might with proper passports motor into the southern provinces—through the Midi or along the Riviera. But motor toward the battle front on the north or east—never. Not even with a military chauffeur, and the military chauffeurs had been mobilized long since. Thus within a few hours our well-laid plans were completely upset. It was evident that while the French War Office was glad of American sympathy it looked upon the confusion of the German invaders as a more pressing matter than the granting of privileges to American correspondents.

After our mission had become known and while Johnson, pursuing another tack, was busy with the heads of bureaus looking for our *authorisation*,

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

there came to our hotel ambitious young motorists eager to escort us up to the front. They placed their cars at our disposal—provided they could go along to drive us. Some of them had served as ambulance or dispatch bearers during the early days of the war. They still carried their little pink driving licenses. But they were useless now because, as the vast organization back of the lines became systematized, only chauffeurs regularly mobilized in the French army were allowed in the automobile service.

The days of waiting that followed our arrival were quiet but not uneventful. While negotiations proceeded we lived in a state of uncertainty, for at any moment word might come from the War Office that would send us up to the front. There were many times in this well-ordered city that it was impossible to comprehend the situation—to realize that an invading army was being held in check on a long front whose nearest point was less than two hours' distance away by automobile.

During this period of anticipation, we came to know a new Paris, a Paris bereft of its gaiety and frivolity, a city of a great resolve and of a lofty and unconquerable spirit. If on the surface there were

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

few material changes, it was in the inner consciousness of the city that a greater change had taken place. We noticed this particularly in the hotels. One had a feeling that a soul had crept into their empty shells and that those of us who lived in them were no longer strangers but shared with this people a common menace and united in a common prayer that France might win in the great struggle for her independence.

The Americans in Paris were not now clamoring for money and government escort home. The rabble that stormed the embassy doors at the outbreak of the war had long since returned and in its place were citizens of another type. Some were salesmen for various American munition and motor truck factories, but the majority were here for a less material purpose, to serve in the American Ambulance at Neuilly, in the various branch hospitals in the provinces, in the relief clearing houses and in countless other ways that Americans have adopted of showing where their sympathies lie. Architects graduated from the Beaux Arts and painters from the different ateliers had not forgotten the debt they owed to France for her inspiration and encouragement. And surgeons, physicians, nurses

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

and women of wealth were giving their services to lessen the suffering caused by the war.

These men and women have done much to maintain a balance in France. Their generosity and unselfishness have offset in the eyes of the people the feeble policies of a government that has done everything in its power to shatter American prestige and the ideals for which American patriotism has stood.

There was a charming view from my window. In the foreground the blooming chestnuts with their lush foliage, on either hand the wide stretches of the Champs Elysées, in the distance beyond the Avenue Montaigne and the river the lofty skeleton of the Eiffel Tower. On the *Espagne* in mid ocean we received news of the world and the daily *communiqué* of the War Office from the Eiffel Tower. Its wireless is of vital importance and they guard the Tower carefully. Mitraileuses are mounted on the platforms and a guard of soldiers is stationed around the base. There are also mitraileuses in place of the statuary that formerly crowned the Arc de Triomphe at the top of the Champs Elysées. A friend of ours, a nurse at Neuilly, who lives close to the Arch, says that on the night of the



Army chauffeurs at Epernay—June 26. In peace times, one owns a factory employing 350 hands, another a hotel on the Riviera and a third is a book publisher in Paris

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

Zeppelin raid there was an infernal racket from the machine guns trying to pot the cigar-shaped intruder in the sky. She felt that the whole war was being fought out just beyond her bedroom window.

The other day a yellow dirigible flew about the Eiffel Tower, then pointed its nose upward, hung above in the sky for a while and sailed off toward the flying field at Buc. This, I think, was the day that Warneford lost his life at Buc. He had destroyed a Zeppelin single-handed and was being lionized in Paris. After luncheon with a number of friends at the Ritz he drove away in his motor. Two hours later word came in by telephone that his machine had buckled under him and that he and his guest, the American correspondent Needham, had been killed.

We missed the long procession of fashionable vehicles in the Champs Elysées, en route to the Bois. In its place an occasional gray motor passes, or a taxicab, or a lumbering horse-drawn bus filled with convalescent wounded out for an airing. The Avenue d'Antin leads into the Rond Point on our right. Out of it at times come regiments of infantry changing barracks, or, in full equipment, march-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

ing to a railway station to entrain for the front. Again a Red-Cross ambulance dashes out of the street and across the open place. Its destination also is the railway station but its mission is to carry back the wounded. Spahi soldiers, distinguished by their picturesque costumes and lofty hats, or *poilus* in red kepis and long light blue coats, amble about beneath the trees. Their legs are bandaged or their arms are in slings and they walk with the help of crutches and canes. Some of them bask in the sun on the benches or stand in the crowd with the children further down the avenue in front of the Guignol.

Many of the great hotels of the neighborhood—the Elysée Palace, Astoria and Hotel d'Iéna—have been converted into hospitals and fly the flag of the other Allies—Russia, Japan and Great Britain.

The spirit of sympathy and consideration that prevails throughout the city holds even the taxi drivers in its grip. I was standing one day on an island of safety in front of the Madeleine. A convalescent soldier, with emaciated cheeks, pale face and using a heavy stick as a prop to his bandaged leg, was crossing in front of me. A long file of taxis bore down on him from the Boulevard des

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

Capucines. This man, who had braved the big guns and shrapnel of the trenches, stood panic-stricken, frightened and irresolute. The leading taxi came to a dead stop and the long procession of vehicles behind it followed suit. The driver beckoned to the soldier and said soothingly, as he might speak to a child, "*Allez donc! mon enfant!*" And the line waited patiently until the invalid had crossed over to the opposite curb.

The streets and shops of Paris! What stories you will yield up when the great war is over and there are abler pens than mine to tell them!

With Charles Butler, the architect, back in Paris to work in the American Relief and be near his old comrades of the Beaux Arts, I went into an art shop in the neighborhood of the school to buy some materials. There were no young clerks, they were all *mobilisé*. The good woman in charge of the shop showed us a letter just received from an infantry sergeant in a prison camp "somewhere in France." He enclosed a long list of water-color supplies, carefully made out in a hand like copper-plate—Whatman board, brushes, paints and erasers—that were to be sent to him for one of his prisoners. The prisoner was an Austrian nobleman

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

and was very *triste*, he said. He was an amateur painter and the water-color sketches would serve to pass the long, monotonous days in the camp. He, the sergeant, would be personally responsible for the payment of the account.

On another occasion, I went with Butler into a small lithographer's shop in the Rue Madame. For days I had been searching Paris for a certain kind of paper that comes from Austria—twice before I had found the same shop closed. Now a bell tinkled inside, a bolt was shot back and the door opened slowly. A man of middle age appeared out of the darkness and asked us to enter. He limped slightly and was timid and nervous. He seemed to crave company. We rummaged through long drawers for the paper we wanted and among the shelves for crayons and ink. The man took us about the shop. The presses and work tables were carefully dusted, the stools for the men in place, the dabbers and rollers were ready to hand as though they had just dropped them and might return at any moment to pick them up again. But there was no one at all in sight. Except for the caretaker and his cat the shop was deserted and as quiet as a tomb. A ray of sunshine crept through a crack and touched with



The tree bordered Marne canal

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

scarlet some geraniums on the window sill. This was the only note of color, it was a place of deep shadows, a place strangely peopled with ghosts. The spirits of these absent men seemed to hover about the empty spaces. We did not have to be told where they were.

The *patron* had been killed at Charleroi in the early days of the war. Of the fourteen employés four had fallen since, three had been wounded and were convalescing in hospitals and the others were with the troops in the trenches about Arras. The caretaker himself had been wounded. When he was discharged from the hospital he had returned to open the shop. It had been a lonely vigil during the long gray winter days, he said, when he could only stare at the empty work tables. And when he half closed his eyes he could see dimly the figures of the men struggling under the murderous fire of the German guns on Notre Dame de Lorette. He looked for four o'clock each afternoon when he might shut the doors and dreaded opening them again in the morning. But now June had come, the chestnuts were in bloom, there was life in the streets and bright color in the Luxembourg gardens. And France, with her high ideals, her glori-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

ous history, her art, her literature and the fearful sacrifice that she was making that the country might be saved for posterity, France would win. All this he told us—very simply. And when the war was over, those that were left of the men would come back and they would start the presses of the lithographer's shop in the Rue Madame.

The Latin quarter of these nights was the Paris of François Villon, poet, student and burglar. The narrow twisting streets were unlighted except for the mellow glow from an occasional shop window. One can picture Villon as he hurries to the Pestle to empty the purse he has just stolen at another favorite haunt, the Mule. It needed only the flaring flambeaux sticking out from the walls or the iron baskets filled with pitch knots to reanimate the shade of a maker of immortal laughter, another François, surnamed Rabelais. Through these dark alleys, one may sense the roaming spirit of the greatest love maker that a nation supreme in love making ever produced, Louis François, Duc de Richelieu, as he steals to a rendezvous with some fragile marquise. A few years later he might have passed that prince of adventurers, Maurice de Saxe, upon his way to Adrienne Lecouvreur. It was soon

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

after the news of such a visit reached the ears of the Duchesse de Bouillon, also an adorer of the irresistible Maurice, that a mysterious death set free the soul of Adrienne. She was denied a resting place in consecrated ground and through these same shadows rumbled the cart in which a few devoted friends carried her body to a nameless grave in a field where now stands the mansion at No. 115, Rue de Grenelle.

Cartouche, the master thief of France, glides by wrapped in the cloak to which he gave his name and beneath it hides a bit of plunder the theft of which will set all Paris laughing to-morrow. It is the rapier of the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, and its hilt is a mass of precious stones. Another and as great a villain follows him. He is the Count Cagliostro bringing his charms and incantations to some rich dupe in one of the great houses of the Faubourg St. Germain. Follow later Jean Jacques Rousseau and his inexplicable Thérèse Le Vasseur, the Reverend Laurence Sterne in search of the politely improper, the young Voltaire hurrying to his room in the Green Basket, the royal policeman, La Reynie, coming to escort another titled prisoner to the Bastille for participation in the Affair of the

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

Poisons. Turn from the memories of this famous company, look upward, and one is brought back with a start to present-day reality. Through the gabled roofs and toppling chimneys on either side that struggle to meet overhead a solitary light moves slowly across the sky. It is the light of an aeroplane on watch over Paris.

One night we drove over to Lavenue's. Shades of Stevenson and Henley, what a change was here! Even the habitués of our later day were scattered—Harrison, Ned Simmons, Dicky Brooks, Bob Aitken, Gilbert White, Walden. Gone were the students that went only to the Petit Lavenue when the check came from home. Gone were the American gourmets that frequented the *Jardin* and always tipped the head waiter—gone to Cairo or Newport or California were the slender beauties that sometimes graced the *Terrasse*. In their places were the omnipresent military and a few travelers from the provinces just arrived at the Gare Montparnasse. Lavenue's seemed deserted. The ubiquitous Monsieur Baer was in evidence and as hospitable as ever, but Schumacher, of the glorious violin, was not. He had refused many offers to come to America. He preferred his clientele in



Automobile commissary train, Champagne district. (Photo by French Government)

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

the café. It was an artistic clientele and artists had souls. None of them would ever be stirred by Schumacher's violin again. He had returned to Germany to join his regiment and had been killed in action months before.

We recognized few familiar faces among the employés. Owen Johnson asked our waiter how old he was. He had seventeen years, he admitted shamefacedly, and his assistant, the omnibus, was one year his junior. Young to be a waiter, true, but the *sommellier* had seventy-five years. Seventeen and seventy-five! And the men of fighting age in between were all gone—they too were in the Artois sector or in the trenches above the Aisne.

A drizzle of rain was falling as we went out. I thought of those other nights when I had been at Lavenue's and looked out over the *place* in the rain. The outlines of the buses and tram cars, of the market carts and lamp posts and pedestrians were reflected in irregular snake-like spirals down to the curb at my feet. I had thought often what an amusing composition it would make in color, but everything was keyed in a gray green monotone to-night. I was only faintly interested when Johnson reminded me of the time the locomotive ran

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

wild, broke through the wall of the Gare Montparnasse and hung suspended from the second story over the pavement. My thoughts were with Schumacher and his violin or in the trenches with the men from the lithographer's shop in the Rue Madame.

Further along the Boulevard is the Café du Dôme. We strolled on to it through the mist for a *demitasse*. Here too a host of memories held me. I thought of Augustus Thomas and Doctor Robbins with their apartments above the café and the large bow windows at the apex of the triangle that reminded one of the spacious pilot house of a Mississippi River steamer. Thomas said he always had to check an inclination to stand at the wheel in the bow window and steer the apartment in safety past the snags in the Boulevard. Thomas and Robbins long since returned to America. There was no poker game in the back of the café. There was no Billy Hereford or Harry Leon Wilson or "Tark" or Julian Street or Berkeley Smith. While we sat under the dripping canvas on the sidewalk I thought of this coterie on the afternoon that we adjourned to the café following the famous one-round knock-out in the sacred precincts of Whistler's

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

studio. I thought of that evening years ago when I arrived in Paris from Italy with my first motor car. I was unable to find a garage and left it in front of the "Dôme" and rose at intervals through the night to peer through the windows of the hotel across the street and assure myself that it was still safe. Other times other customs. Joseph, who guarded it that night, has been gone long since. Eugène, too, is *mobilisé*. There were strange waiters in the café, strange faces behind the *caisse* and strange patrons in place of the friends I had known.

The day following the episode of the car I found a garage in the Rue Vaugirard. I patronized it ever afterward even though I personally abandoned the quarter and lived in a hotel in the Rue de Rivoli. On my arrival in Paris on my last motor tour in France, two years before, I had left orders that the car be washed and made ready for an early start. The next day when I was fifty miles out of Paris on my way to Havre to catch the steamer a rainstorm set in. I discovered that I had no side curtains. They had been taken out while the car was being washed and overlooked in the hurry of departure. During one of these days of waiting it occurred to me that I would call at the Garage

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

Cogér to renew my acquaintance with the *patron* and incidentally to get my side curtains.

I arrived at an inopportune moment. The *patron* was standing in the courtyard in the uniform of an infantry regiment of the line. He was buckling on his accoutrements. "You see," he said, smiling, "I am a soldier now, not a *mechanicien*, I served at the Marne, then I was given leave of absence. But I've been ordered out again, our regiment starts for the Arras sector to-night."

He looked behind him with a brave show of confidence. His five little girls stood in the doorway, each one year taller than the other, like a ladder. In the shadow of the doorway stood his wife. She had been crying but her face was now calm and white. In it was that spiritual look that we noticed in the faces of many of the French women, that expression of a lofty ideal and a great sacrifice. It must be, I imagine, the same spirit that animated the women of the South in the Civil War and the American women in the Revolution. To be ordered to the Arras sector means being sent into the thickest of the fighting, into the zone of greatest danger in the western area. The garage keeper's wife stepped down and helped adjust the cross straps



An artilleryman watering his horse in a village back of the front in the Aisne valley

A NEW PARIS OF OLD MEMORIES

over her husband's shoulders while the youngest of the little girls, uncomprehending, hid in the folds of her skirts. I shook hands with the husband, saluted, and wished him "bon chance." As I left the wife, still composed, smiled bravely and waved her hand.

I saw her again the following Sunday in the Luxembourg Gardens. There was music by the Concert Rouge under the trees, naval engagements of tragic importance were occurring in the basin where yachts with bright colored sails of orange or white or red were drawn into the vortex of the flowing fountain or colliding with disastrous results in mid-pool. She was very calm and her troop of girls, with small understanding of the battle that was being fought on this peaceful June Sunday some fifty miles outside of Paris, were intently watching the toy yachts in the basin. Beyond the chimney pots on the houses that rise above the chestnuts lining the Boul' Miche' an aeroplane hovered in the great bowl of the sky. It was a sight so common that the children paid no attention to it. It came nearer, like a war eagle high above the house tops, circled the gardens and swept off in the direction of Versailles.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

“Our men guard us well, Monsieur,” said the wife of the garage keeper. “No, there is no news from the front, as yet—but no news is good news,” she added hopefully. And her confidence inspired me to feel that all was well about Arras. Ah, you women of France, to what lofty heights of patriotism and supreme self-abnegation have you lifted yourselves, what an example of devotion and heroic resolve you are affording the women of the world!

I am reminded for the first time as I write this that one of my objects in going to the Rue Vaugirard was to recover my side curtains. For all I know to the contrary my side curtains are still in the Rue Vaugirard.

CHAPTER III

A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS AND THE CHAMPAGNE DISTRICT

AFTER days of waiting that seemed like weeks, the much-coveted permission to go to the front came unexpectedly. Johnson burst upon my meditations at the Café des Gauffres one afternoon and rushed with me over to the War Office. Followed the displaying of passports and signing of papers—then behold extraordinary photographs taken by a local expert that made us look like two exhibits from the Rogue's Gallery. These were affixed to two little yellow cards and we received our *authorisation* to the —th Army Corps in the Rheims sector and the valley of the Aisne.

It was planned at first to make the entire tour by motor. But at the last moment this was changed and we commenced the initial stage of the journey—to Epernay—by rail. From this point until we took train back to Paris from Château-Thierry the tour was under the escort and direction of the

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

army and was accomplished in long gray army automobiles of divers makes and extraordinary speed and power.

A captain of the general staff took charge of us on the station platform in the morning. With him was another officer of lesser rank. Let me pay here my little tribute to Captain X——, who proves again that a sportsman in times of peace makes a gallant and chivalrous officer in the more serious game of war.

I remember of old the "Waters Express," the fast train that left the Gare de l'Est and whisked its passengers down in short order to the *cures* of the Vosges—Contrexéville, Vittel, Plombières. Now it seemed little changed—rather more crowded and with a preponderance of gold lace and uniforms of the new Joffre blue. But there were the same prosperous-looking merchants going to Nancy, the same corpulent ladies with dogs en route to Vittel, and the same nervous little *maître d'hôtel* who dealt us out tickets for the first or second sitting at *déjeuner*.

Meaux passed—a blur of broken walls and train sheds where the German drive began to crumple at the Battle of the Marne; splotches of dark blue



At staff headquarters in the Aisne valley.

A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS

above red breeches were silhouetted against the sky where the Territorials guarded the railway line. Yellow fields swept by with rusty barbed-wire entanglements showing above the grain—sometimes a mound with a cross of twigs or a little patch of flowers.

At Epernay there were more staff officers to meet us and four waiting automobiles; an open pilot car, a truck for the luggage, and limousines upholstered in whipcord. In the one to which Arnold Bennett and I were assigned were calling card case, clock, vanity box, and a cut-glass vase for flowers, exactly as though my lady had just left it. But my lady did not leave the two carbines slung across on straps within easy reach. Our reception left a businesslike impression. There was no fuss, no delay, everything worked apparently as a small part of a most efficient organization. The chauffeurs took our valises. On our return that night we found them carefully marked and placed in our several rooms in the hotels upon which we were billeted.

Clouds of dust followed in our wake as the cars rushed out of Epernay, brushing by commissary wagons loaded with bread and provisions, ammunition caissons lumbering along the roadside, or sol-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

diers loitering in the doorways. We halted at a bridge for the password. On the left, stretching away in a gentle curve to the northwest, was the tree-bordered Marne Canal, its mirrorlike reflections little suggesting the chaos and confusion when Von Kluck's legions were rolled back across its placid waters by d'Esperey's Fifth Army Corps last September. Then Marfaux. It is a little village like the hundreds dotting the plain of Champagne. The shells of houses and the toppling chimneys brought me face to face for the first time with the dreadful thing that has befallen France. There was not a roof-tree standing in the hamlet, gaping doors and windows stared at us and gaunt, broken walls full of shot holes reared themselves above masses of crumbled debris. Of its inhabitants only the schoolmaster with his wife and two small children remained. The Germans, he said, had been pleasant enough on their victorious march to Paris. But on the retreat! He held up his hands: he pointed to the houses of the village.

We called on a division commander—he was quartered in a pretty château with a peaceful garden and graveled walks. Our party of correspondents consisted of Owen Johnson, Arnold Bennett,

A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS

George Mair, and the writer. The commander was very cordial and gave orders that we should be allowed every opportunity for observation.

Soon after leaving headquarters we were dodging and twisting through narrow lanes. We were getting nearer to the zone of fire, and the chauffeurs knew the value of protecting walls and hedges. We climbed a little hill through an avenue of trees, the leafy foliage forming a canopy above, and stopped in the stable yard of another château. A short walk past the chapel—with a large shell hole in its wall and near by a cavity where a giant *marmite* had exploded in the shrubbery—and we reached a terrace. From this vantage point the whole beautiful Aisne Valley lay spread out before us. Vineyards and fields in the foreground, winding roads with sentinel-like trees, wooded copses, the glint of a stream—the landscape shimmering in the June sunshine. It was our first view of the battlefields of the Champagne district. In the distance to the right were the wooded slopes of the Argonne Forest. Nearer was the ruined village of Suippes, about which has centered some of the bitterest fighting in the western area.

The flat plain of the Champs de Châlons—the

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

practice ground of the French army, and the field upon which most of the early airmen (Latham, Blériot, Farman, and Lorraine) learned to fly—lay beyond the banks of the Vesle. Close to it was their old headquarters, the battered village of Mourmelon-le-Grand. Crisscrossing the landscape were countless roads: broad highways or smaller *chemins de communications*. There was nothing moving on them—even under the glasses there was nothing living in sight.

Stretching from east to west, framed in by the trees beneath the ridge, ran a long white line, broken sometimes where it disappeared beyond a knoll—the French trenches. Further away, extending across the whole stage from one proscenium arch to the other, a second white scar marked the German positions on the Craonne plateau. The land beyond that second white scar was also France, that part of manufacturing and coal-bearing France that is now in the hands of the enemy. A puff of white smoke arose—shrapnel. A yellow cloud showed where an explosive shell came in contact with something. Other white puffs appeared further away on the slope, but there was no sound of firing—the wind was behind us and it was so



Entrance to the deserted Château Fère d'Isly

A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS

quiet in the drowsy sunshine that we could hear the hum of insect life in the garden.

We walked on a few yards—then looked to the northwest. Rheims lay basking in the sunlight, the twin towers of the cathedral and the broken chimneys silhouetted against the clear sky.

It was only yesterday, I thought, since I had last driven my car from Metz eastward over that same white ribbon of road to Rheims. Now the road lay almost midway between the French and German positions and was daily swept by a murderous shell fire. And the cathedral! But with the naked eye the damage done to it from this distance was negligible. The roof was partly gone. Except for this the graceful outlines were unchanged. The towers and belfries still soared majestically above the town, apparently undaunted by the engines of war now sweeping the wide expanse of the Aisne and Vesle Valleys. Brought nearer under the field glasses we could see plainly the great white scar on the façade where the stone became calcined by the flames that followed the first bombardment by the Germans on the seventeenth of September, 1914.

We had some difficulty getting closer to Rheims. The chauffeurs were for going directly down the

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

hill and meeting the main road to the city below. They were ordered back by our staff captain. "I am not responsible for you correspondents," he said, "but I must be careful of my own men."

That thought for the men was always uppermost. A sudden shower as we slipped through country by-ways found only one of our chauffeurs with a rain-coat. The Captain offered his own to the other. We made a detour to avoid the exposed portion of the road—then a short dash into Rheims. Nearing the town gates we called on the brigade commander, a fine grizzled type like one of our old Indian fighters—such as Lawton or Crook. His quarters were not imposing—the four bare walls of a low-ceilinged office room, dingy windows, large-scale maps, plans and official papers strewn over a table; the clump of the hob-nailed boots of the sentries in the hall outside and the tinkle of a telephone bell in the adjoining room as reports came in from distant batteries raking the Aisne Valley. The staff captain who took us in charge said he had followed on the heels of the Germans when they were driven out last September and that on one occasion since, over three thousand shells had been fired into the city during the short space of twenty-four hours.

A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS

That was easy enough to understand once we had reached the cathedral and the devastated district behind it. What had appeared from a distance to be minor damage became real havoc on closer acquaintance. On the splendid west front the hundreds of little statues set in their niches are all damaged, some minus hands and legs and arms and others swept away entirely. The stained glass of the great rose window is wrecked, many of the columns supporting the smaller arches twisted or cracked by the fierce heat, the gargoyles shot off and the splendid portals—inside and out—so badly damaged that it is unlikely they can ever be restored.

The white scar that sweeps up the northwest tower tells better than words the graphic story of shell fire and conflagration. It is one of the wonders of the world that Rheims Cathedral, desecrated, shot at continually for months, preserves its majesty unimpaired, its towers rising undaunted above the grass-grown cobbles of the square serene and unconquerable.

On one side of the *place* the Grand Hotel has a hole in its second story big enough to accommodate the traditional coach and four. The hotel awak-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

ened old memories. I thought of it as I had known it in the early days of aviation when Farman and Lorraine and Cockburn made it their quarters and the courtyard echoed the explosions of the motors coming in at all hours from the flying field of Béthany. Now a ditch extends across the flying field of Béthany. In front of it are barbed wire entanglements and *chevaux-de-frise* and in its shadows are men in Joffre blue with rifles and hand grenades who burrow further into its depths when they hear the warning crackle of a shell from the direction of the Craonne Plateau.

On the other side of the *place* is the Hotel Lion d'Or. Gone is its American bar and the little French-Canadian who made the only worth-while cocktail in France outside of Paris. The windows are gaping holes—the shutters blown away. There is debris heaped up in the rooms and courtyard and the walls are punctured with holes where the shells have ricocheted off the cobbled pavement.

Back of the cathedral is a dreary waste. Houses gutted, outer walls swiped off as though a curtain had been raised in a theater showing the intimate interior—the wall paper of the different rooms, the broken rafters, fragments of beds and tables, fire-



Staff motor car with wire cutting apparatus. (Photo by French Government)

A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS

places, bric-a-brac and tattered curtains blowing in the wind. The Rue de l'Université, the Rue des Cordeliers, the Rue Eugene Desteuque looked like the streets of Salem after the fire. In many cases the people insist on returning to their homes. One little old lady was calmly knitting in the broken doorway of her house though the corner of it was crushed back like the bow of an ocean steamship after a collision.

Of all the devastation in or near the cathedral only Dubois' statue of Joan d'Arc in front of the Great Doors is, as yet, untouched. The legs of the horse are chipped by fragments of flying shells, but the Maid rides serenely above. In her hands she holds the tricolor and at the foot of the pedestal are wreaths and fresh flowers—the people of Rheims look upon her invulnerability as a good omen.

Military necessity is a fearful thing. In our own Civil War it was the excuse for laying waste the prosperous region through which Sherman marched to the sea, for the bombardment of Charleston, Mobile and Vicksburg and for numerous hardships inflicted on the civil population by both sides. In the war of 1812 the British shelled the new capital at Washington and pillaged the town. Yet through

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

all the wars that have ravaged France and Belgium their historic monuments have been respected. In this great war there has been more wilful devastation on the part of the Germans than in all the others that have swept Europe since the days of the Huns and Vandals.

Rheims, Soissons, Senlis, Albert, Arras, Ypres, Louvain, Malines, Dixmude! What a list! What a refutation of the idea that civilization has advanced or that German Kultur of the twentieth century is an improvement upon the barbarism of the middle ages!

Returning to Epernay for the night through the dusk, we passed companies of infantry moving up to relieve those at the front—the French trenches at Béthany are only a little over a mile outside of Rheims—and motor transports and wagons waiting at the depots to carry up their supplies to the lines under cover of the darkness. We spent a restless night in an uncomfortable little hotel kept by a very pretty landlady. There was a glow in the sky over Rheims, and through the wakeful hours sounded the drone of an aeroplane on patrol duty over the town.

Our staff captain waked me at dawn. Through

A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS

a crisp, dewy morning we drove back over the same road to Rheims. There was some doubt about our being allowed to pass into the town. The French had captured some trenches in the Argonne and the Germans had retaliated by a Sunday-morning bombardment of the cathedral—the shelling had commenced at daybreak. After a little discussion our Indian fighter of the day before relented and we motored on through streets profoundly silent. The afternoon before we had driven directly up to the open place in front of the cathedral. This time we left the cars in a side street near at hand behind the shelter of protecting walls.

Borne down on the wind, which had changed to the northwest, was the crackle of artillery fire and the noise of explosive shells from the Plateau and the Valley. We walked about the cathedral. A six-inch shell had dropped in the little sheltered spot in the rear and torn a hole in the ground—except for this the salvo was without result. We went inside. Sainsalieu, the architect, and the others did not remove their hats. I wondered why. It was because the sanctuary had been violated and the sacrament removed; the great cathedral was no longer a house of God. It was Sunday morning,

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

but there were no services, no priests intoning the mass, no heavy roll of the organ—only the echo of our muffled voices in the vaulted spaces above.

Sainsalieu, who has been working steadily inside the building on his plans for its restoration through so many weeks of bombardment that the whistle of shells means nothing to him, gave me his chair and table to aid me in my drawing. Then he gave me a key. The cathedral is carefully locked up at all times. There is a gate in the fence beyond the sand bags that protect the sculpture at the base of the building and a small wooden door in place of the heavy one in the right portal. The same key opens both, and also another little door on the right as you enter. This little inside door is as tempting as the one that led to Bluebeard's closet for his headless wives. I was asked to give my word of honor that I would not open it, for it leads to the stairway that climbs up through the southwest tower to the roof. No one is allowed on the roof, so careful are the French authorities that the Germans shall not be given the slightest excuse for bombarding the building under the pretext that it is being used for observation purposes.

Sainsalieu made me promise not to give the key to



Watching effect of salvo from French "75's." Artillery position in the Aisne valley—June 28th

100
 90
 80
 70
 60
 50
 40
 30
 20
 10
 0

A MOTOR TOUR TO RHEIMS

any one, but to keep it until I met him at *déjeuner* at a certain hotel. Then he went with the others to Béthany and I locked myself in. It was awesomely quiet within the great building as I went on with my work. The desultory fire of the guns to the north was muffled. It was apparently no more threatening than the cooing of the pigeons in the vast dome overhead. There was a flutter of wings when a shell exploded in the direction of the Place Royale, and I started when a shower of glass, loosened from its setting by the wind, crashed down on the flagstones of the nave. This was the only interruption. When I left I carefully locked the door, then I closed the gate and locked it behind me. A man who had been apparently waiting outside asked me for the key to the cathedral. Remembering my promise, I refused to give it to him. He was willing enough to engage me in conversation, but this was no place, I thought, for a parley. The *parvis* was strangely silent and except for us two, deserted. There was an impressive stillness in the town, the midday lull in the firing while both sides were at dinner; but there was never any telling when the racket might start up again.

I went on through lonely streets, past houses

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

with broken shutters, windows agape, walls spattered with shot holes and chimneys leaning precariously over the street to the rendezvous at the Hotel ———, the only hotel now open in Rheims. Sainsalieu was not there. We were almost through luncheon when a hasty courier arrived in the person of a boy on a bicycle who, clothed with the proper authority, begged that the American gentleman give him the key to the cathedral.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE AISNE VALLEY

AFTERNOON found us scooting along the road to Soissons, the same *route nationale* I had known in my motor-tours that had carried me westward to Compiègne, Beauvais, Rouen, and Havre. Long lines of poplars shot by in a blur; the roar of the motor echoed in the *swish, swish* as we rushed past the boles of the trees. A flock of sheep turned out of a lane, an incongruously peaceful note in an atmosphere of big guns and destruction. We left the main road shortly, and edged our way toward the front through protected byways or between the walls of old, gray villages. We climbed a slope, interviewed another brigade commander, left the cars in a protected place, and walked into the depths of a thickly wooded forest. From the outside it looked peaceful enough—a mass of dark green on a ridge above a slumbering hamlet. There was nothing to suggest that within its shadows bristling guns were sunken in well-concealed emplacements,

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

that the heavy foliage hid the position of the ——st Battery of Artillery. They had the usual complement of "75's," with an anti-air-craft gun and a huge "caterpillar," with its gray nose pointed down into the ground to avoid detection by the watchful Germans on the hills beyond.

The stables were cunningly hidden in the thick of the wood. The stalls were covered with green boughs. The battery has been in the same position since last November, and every horse had its name over the stall, like an old-time fire-engine house in New York—LeBeau, Victoire, L'Hermite, Marie Louise.

The quarters of the men were in well-protected underground huts covered with timbers and saplings. They had rough sketches on the walls and flowers in vases. In cages were magpies and small song-birds, and a musician had rigged up a xylophone by hanging wine-bottles containing different amounts of water on a sapling suspended between two trees. On this he played selections from the operas. Near by, almost at his feet, was the grave of one of his comrades.

On the grave were fresh flowers and a wreath, and an inscription roughly cut with a knife on a piece



French war plane in a wheat field of the Champagne district

IN THE AISNE VALLEY

of board, "François, our friend, dead on the field of honor." The artilleryman tinkled the "William Tell" overture on his musical glasses. He wore a tight-fitting jacket like a Zouave's, and as I stood listening to his concert I was reminded of that splendid story of the Zouaves I had just heard in Paris. A regiment of them overreached itself in a charge in the Argonne. It was cut off by the enemy, and virtually wiped out. The Germans, adopting tactics that have been unheard of in modern warfare, costumed themselves in the uniforms of the dead men. As they moved back to attack the French lines, they pushed a few of the survivors in front of them. From the trenches the missing regiment of Zouaves appeared, straggling along the hillside. It closed in until, as it was almost upon them, the French heard a voice from the advancing host shout, "In the name of God! Fire!"

The name of the soldier who died in the volley from his own lines is unknown. His exploit was read to the army in the orders of the day.

It was a quiet afternoon along this part of the front. It was quiet, rather, until, as we were looking at a blue-gray "75," with its muzzle pointed out of a bough of leaves, an order came by telephone,

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

and a shell was slipped into the timing mechanism. A dial was set; in a few seconds the shell was withdrawn and locked in the breech of the gun, and an officer pulled a lanyard. There was a report—not so loud a report as I had expected—a whiff of smoke came from the breech, and the shell had gone on its mission to an invisible enemy beyond the slope, while the leaves overhead, hiding the gray muzzle, settled back into place.

I read the story of a correspondent who boasted that five shells were fired for his special benefit. I prefer to think that this one was fired for France.

A hot and dusty walk and we descended into a little village. In a château now being used as headquarters we met the battery commander and his staff. We had *citron pressé*, which was most refreshing, and clicked our glasses and said, "Vive la France."

The cars were waiting at a point some distance from where we had left them. The chauffeurs told us that the President of the Republic had just gone past in his motor.

Again we swept on through long avenues of trees, then turned off the main road and drove

IN THE AISNE VALLEY

through a well-guarded entrance up to the headquarters of the —th Army Corps. We met General d'Esperey, he who held so stoutly his position in the center against Von Buelow and Von Kluck in the Battle of the Marne—a small man physically but with the erect carriage of a martinet, a kindly smile, a determined jaw, a leader of men apparently.

We encountered a cavalcade of military motors in the courtyard and extending in a long file out into the road beyond. I wondered what war must have looked like before the days of the automobile. I wondered what an old-time painter of battle scenes would have done without his cavalry charges, his dashing orderlies, his forced marches, and his picturesque bringing up of the guns to cover a retreat. There have been no cavalry actions worthy of the name in the western area since Charleroi and the engagements that followed the effort of the Allies to check the German drive on Paris. The dashing orderlies are mounted on motorcycles or they ride in racing voiturettes with a fine turn of speed. Forced marches are accomplished in motor trucks or taxicabs and most of the guns have been so long in the same position that the artillerymen

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

have planted little gardens near the doorways of their dugouts.

I am reminded of all this because it was at Corps headquarters that we met Hofbauer, the painter. We had been told we might see him, he knew only that some correspondents were expected. He was dumfounded when Johnson and I stepped out of the motor—swept back in a moment to the friends he had left behind in America. I had known him during the early days in Paris and later in New York. When war was declared he was at work on a big mural decoration at Richmond, Va. When the call came for reserves he left it unfinished and took the first steamer for Havre. He fought for seven months in the open field and in the trenches. Then his identity was accidentally discovered; he was put on the staff of the ——th Army Corps and given a chance to make a record for history of what he had seen.

His experience has changed him a bit—he is more serious and there are sterner lines in his face.

We wanted to take him with us to Château-Thierry to dine and spend the night—our headquarters had been moved from Epernay. He hesitated—it was very difficult to get leave of absence.



Heavy artillery en route to the front. (Photo by French Government)

IN THE AISNE VALLEY

Johnson spoke to General d'Esperey, and we bundled Hofbauer into our car and swept out into the twilight.

The road to Château-Thierry led us through a beautiful undulating country, wind-blown hillsides, quaint villages, and forests soaked in showers. It was a road of many sudden dips and turns. We were asked continually for the password, insistently by one corpulent old Territorial who raised his gun aloft and rumbled thunder like a veritable Porthos of "The Three Musketeers."

The countersign was always whispered, and I never heard it—not during our entire swing in and out of the front from the Rheims sector as far north as Arras. In this vast network of lines behind lines, of main roads and byways, I wondered how each night the password was sent to the great army of sentries posted throughout the surrounding country. I asked our staff captain whether it was done by telephone or by an orderly in a motor. He evaded the question, and I realized, in the vernacular of the day, that I was "butting in"—that this was a military secret.

Château-Thierry is the birthplace of La Fontaine. That was its sole claim to fame until last

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

September. Now the townspeople speak of the battles in its streets, the fight at the bridge over the Marne, and post cards showing the guns captured from the "Boches" are displayed in the shop windows.

We dined in a private room in the Hôtel du Cygne. In honor of the occasion a bottle of vintage wine, covered with cobwebs, was brought up from the cellar. In the wall above my head was a large hole made by a six-inch shell, on the opposite side another where it had found its way out after wrecking the chandelier and smashing the mirror. The proprietor was very proud of his battle-scarred hostelry. An inn in the Marne Valley that shows no marks of the fighting after the war is over will have to exploit a remarkable cuisine to overcome its lack of souvenirs of the struggle.

We played a post card game after dinner. It was a very innocuous game. Each person present made a sketch on a post card—Bennett, Mair, Johnson, Hofbauer, Captain X——, Captain Z——, Corporal F—— and myself. Then we shuffled up the cards, dealt them out and inscribed them to absent friends. A devilishly exciting finish to an exciting day.



Bombardment of St. Jean des Vignes, Soissons

IN THE AISNE VALLEY

Later, in our rooms, when we talked of New York, Hofbauer was very serious—he wondered when he would ever see it again. The officers and men we met supplemented everything about their plans with the proviso “if I live through the war.” Captain X—— asked me on a motor tour in the country surrounding his château in the Auvergne “if he lived through the war.”

Sweaters and raincoats were needed in the morning, for a cold wind out of the northwest brought with it a dismal rain—a day more like October than June. We were up near the front an hour after we had left the hotel. With the general and his staff we were perched on the observation-platform at division headquarters. The general, with the aid of a large-scale map, which he held down with difficulty in the wind, described the fighting in his sector. A mist hung over the valley in front of us. Little white puffs rolled back from time to time as the curtain lifted—shrapnel exploding over the French trenches close to the river.

At our feet were the extensive stables and courtyard of an old farmstead, not unlike the fortified *manoirs* of Normandy. The yard was filled with cavalrymen grooming their horses. One seldom

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

sees horses so close to the front lines. Directly below, with a guard watching nonchalantly over them, was a group in the peculiar gray-green of the German infantry. They were prisoners from that other France across the river Aisne. They seemed to accept their new environment philosophically, and with the resignation of stoics they went methodically about the unmartial task of sweeping out the stable-yard.

Another sprint over a wide, well-kept road and we reached a hospital of the first line—a field hospital. It was established in the outbuildings of a large farm. Here were a few badly wounded men, too sorely hurt to travel further, and the odor of ether, the atmosphere of aseptics and sterilizers, an auxiliary field operating room in a tent—adjoining the wagon containing the X-ray motor. As we left a bearded Territorial mending the roadway called out, "Take my photograph too, I was a taxi chauffeur in New York."

I took his photograph. I wonder when he will return to his taxi in New York!

Low clouds charged with moisture hung over the aviation camp a few kilometers beyond. A street of white tents gray in the dull light. By each tent

IN THE AISNE VALLEY

stood a motor truck and trailer—on a sudden order the tents could be struck, the aeroplanes dissembled and all moved to another position in the big vans with the celerity of an old-time circus. Thaw and Cowdin belonged to this *escadrille*. Both have since been decorated and Cowdin was “*cité*”—his name read before the army in the orders of the day—for destroying a Taube.

Down the hillside from the camp we came upon the newest invention of the French—an anti-aircraft gun. The officers were very proud of it. It was the famous “75” mounted on a motor truck (here again an example of the utility of the gasoline motor in warfare), with spring posts under each axle to take the recoil. The gun swings on a turntable with an elaborate mechanism for sighting and firing. We were asked not to photograph or describe it. After reading the above, I am convinced I have done neither.

The lieutenant who took me in tow complained of the German spies. They were all about, he said. Two weeks before his men had remarked the flashing of a heliograph beyond a copse on the ridge. When they reached the spot there was no one in sight. But from that time forth no Taubes had

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

come within range either. I with difficulty refrained from asking him why, since the enemy knew his whereabouts, he had not broken camp and with his mobile artillery sought a position elsewhere.

A thing that impressed itself upon us in this and subsequent visits to the front was the class of men serving as army chauffeurs. They represented all walks of life, and many of them were men of means and social position. They were usually privates, though every now and then one of them wore the chevrons of a corporal. Our own drivers on this Aisne Valley tour were very intelligent men, attentive and respectful and exceedingly solicitous about our welfare. Later, when our *tournée* was ending and we were about to take the train back to Paris, Johnson, Bennett, Mair, and I discussed the advisability of making up a little purse in appreciation of their kindness. We fortunately took the precaution first to ask our staff-captain about it. We hastily withdrew our hands from our pockets when we found that in peace times one owned a factory employing three hundred and fifty hands, another was a book publisher in Paris, and a third managed a hotel on the Riviera.

My chauffeur was the book publisher from Paris.

IN THE AISNE VALLEY

He and I had a bond of sympathy in our mutual interest in the arts. He was most anxious that I should see the beautiful Château Fère d'Isly. Through all the talk of the morning, of guns and hospitals, of trenches and *aviatiks*, of grenades and night attacks, he returned at the earliest opportunity to the Château Fère d'Isly. We were bringing up the rear of the procession when he suddenly swung out of the highway to the left, crept up a slope through a dark avenue of trees dripping moisture, and under a beautiful high-arched aqueduct until he slowed up the car at the entrance to the château. The steps were crumbling and moss-covered, the doorway choked with weeds. A few shot holes punctured the walls, the windows gaped at the intruders, and only a single faithful retainer remained to tell us that, although the place was now well behind the lines, the count and his family had not returned since the "Boches" had been driven out of the valley.

The others were waiting for us at a crossroad. I was rather fearful for the book-publishing chauffeur, who had disobeyed orders in leaving the rest of the column without permission. Whatever was thought about our escapade by the officers, nothing

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

was said—the appreciation of things artistic covers a multitude of minor sins in France.

At the crossroad we left Hofbauer and with him two of our staff officers. Their way lay back over the hills to the corps headquarters; ours across the Marne to Château-Thierry, where we were to take the train back to Paris. One of the cars was detached; we shook hands and saluted. We said the conventional thing, but through it the subconscious thought is really uppermost. No one mentions it, but it is there. When? I wonder! They saluted again and drove off in the mist. Our cars turned in the opposite direction, and we motored south to the railway station at Château-Thierry.

CHAPTER V

SOISSONS—A RETROSPECT

ONLY once in my motor tours had I driven through Soissons. I retained a hazy memory of a sleepy little town, of staring white houses, of narrow streets with unsteady chimneys above the tiled roofs, a lime-bordered market place, a partly ruined abbey and a fine old cathedral. A town at peace with the world after a strenuous history, prosperous but not aggressively so. The surrounding wheat fields were an indication of its busy grain trade. Its *specialité*, my little motor book told me, was white beans, and if my memory does not fail me, as a proof thereof white beans were part of the menu at *déjeuner*.

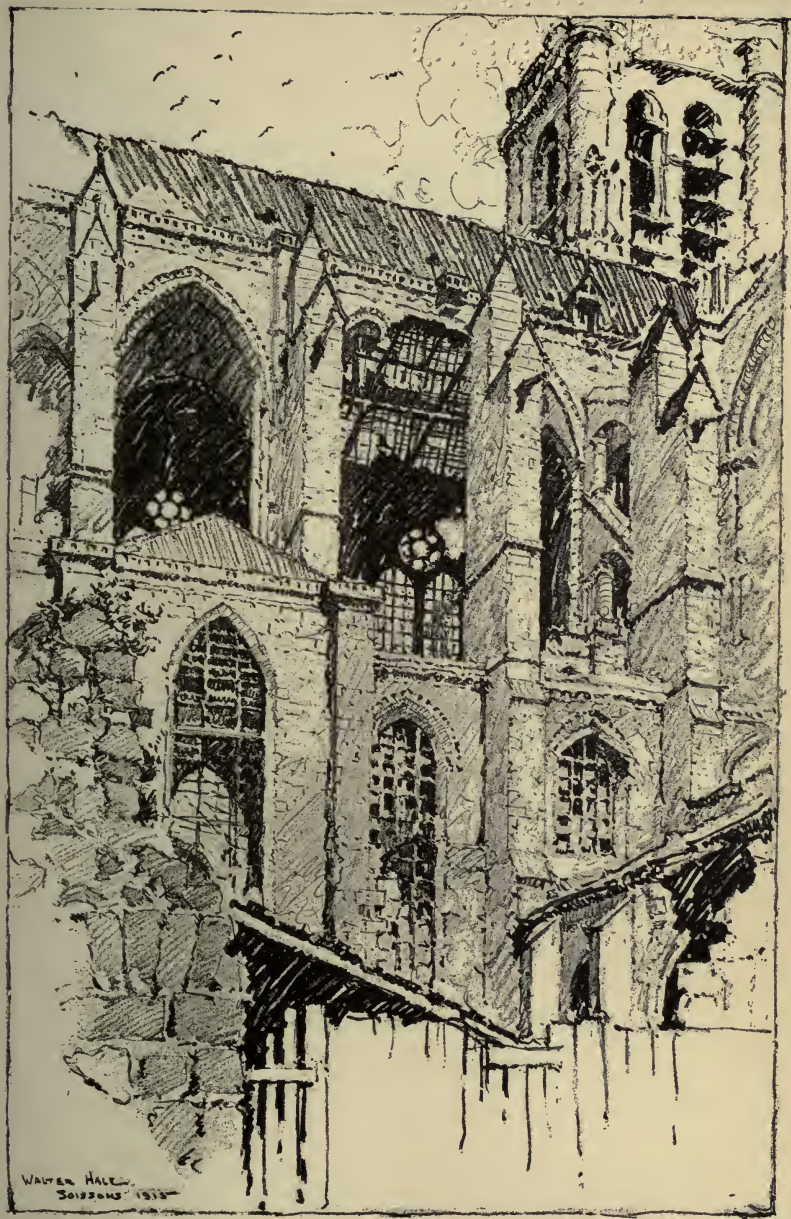
I recollect the road running in from the east and out again to the west. The town was never a great stopping place for motorists. They came in over the *route nationale* from Rheims and went out again over the *route nationale* toward Compiègne. There were no show places except for loitering stu-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

dents and if Soissons received any attention at all it was only to stop, as I had done, for luncheon or to fill the reservoir with the needful essence.

Louis the Debonair was twice imprisoned at Soissons and Thomas à Becket found shelter in the ancient abbey of St. Jean des Vignes. From the days of the Franks and Romans the place was constantly besieged. The Germans gave it their attention in the Franco-Prussian war. When they entered the town after a four days' siege they shot up some of the citizens—a monument to their memory stood in the Place de la Republic—but the damage they inflicted on its ancient monuments was comparatively slight. Civilization has advanced nearly half a century since then, this time the Germans have spared neither the civil population nor the ancient monuments. What was left of the former fortifications has long since disappeared. In the present war Soissons has been of no military importance except during a short interval following the retreat from the Marne, when the right wing of Von Kluck's army rested here.

Yet a more destructive bombardment has been directed against its thirteenth century cathedral than against the loftier buttresses of Rheims. It



Effects of shell fire, Soissons Cathedral

SOISSONS—A RETROSPECT

has the unfortunate distinction of being a better example of the ruthless destruction by the Germans than any other ecclesiastical building in the storm-swept Aisne Valley. In this case the Prussian militarists cannot fall back on the threadbare excuse of military necessity. The towers of the cathedral or of the Abbey of St. Jean des Vignes would be useless as an observatory for the simple reason that a ridge higher than their highest pinnacles intervenes between the northern edge of the town and the German lines. This is a point that Monsieur Dalimier, Minister of the Beaux Arts, wished particularly to impress upon us when we called upon him in Paris.

My drawing of St. Jean des Vignes probably shows better than any words of mine the effect of the German bombardment. It is more or less documentary evidence, though it is only a rough sketch made when the surrounding atmosphere was charged with something more dynamic than the dancing sunlight.

There are times when the effort to register artistic impressions near the lines is attended by a low dull roar in the distance, followed by a nerve-racking explosion close at hand. On these infrequent occasions advantageous positions for "out-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

door sketching," so called, have to be abandoned, as a military expert would say, as untenable. This drawback interfered slightly with my work at Rheims and rather more seriously at Soissons.

We approached the town cautiously. The motor was given a wide open throttle as we swept across the exposed places and slowed down to a soberer pace where walls at the roadside afforded protection. Early in the morning's run after we had crossed the Ourcq and swung into *route nationale* No. 37, the road ran through a smiling landscape with fields of yellowing grain on either side. The harvests throughout France in this first year of the war are plentiful, the vineyards of Champagne will yield a famous *cuvée* as the vintage of 1915. At first we saw women in the fields, working at the hay ricks or bundling up the sheaves; there were even sleepy black and white cows in the pastures. As we went on toward the front the women disappeared, the fields were cut with wide furrows, barbed-wire entanglements showed through the grain, and the round mounds where lay the dead, each marked with its four rough posts, a red cap, a cross or a faded wreath, became more frequent.

As we entered Soissons by the Rue Racine the



A motor mitrailleuse. (Photo by French Government)

SOISSONS—A RETROSPECT

place was enveloped in awesome silence. Again, as at Rheims during the luncheon hour, the great guns on the Craonne plateau and the others on the slopes above the Aisne to the south had ceased their intermittent crackle as though a truce had been declared as the sun touched the meridian.

Again, as at Rheims, there was a wide swath cut in the line of the German fire. Again part of the former prosperous business section was laid waste. In the Rue du Commerce, the Rue de la Congrégation, the Rue du Collège and the district to the northeast near the river most of the houses were mere shells and fires were smoldering in the ruins.

We were met, as usual, at the outskirts of the town by a staff officer, but there were only a few soldiers within the gates. Not enough to do more than patrol duty—not enough, surely, to raise the place to the dignity of a military depot. The French lines are well outside the town to the north and east. As for the *Soissonnais*, the handful of them remaining, like the people of Rheims, cling to their wrecked houses or cellars.

To make a ruin out of a ruin seems a waste of time. A shell, with only its twin towers and part of its thirteenth-century cloisters remaining, St. Jean

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

des Vignes could serve no strategic purpose. The reason for the heavy fire directed at it is incomprehensible. In the war of 1870 the façade was damaged by the heavy German projectiles and the points of the arches calcined by the flames. In the present series of bombardments there has been a more systematic effort to demolish what was left of the structure. A part of the stone shaft surmounting the left tower has been carried off and there are ragged gashes in the arched openings. The top of the tower on the right has been shot away and the hammering of shells and incendiary bombs has left its marks across the entire top of the building. The little statue at the central apex of the arch is gone, the platform supporting the arched portals badly cracked, the tiles smashed into powder, the rafters burned and a furrow cuts through the stone columns and niches of the façade where a shell has swept by.

The wreck of the cathedral is more appalling. A solid old pile, it dates from the twelfth century and was an excellent example of combined Gothic and Romanesque design. It has withstood many sieges, but its massive construction was no proof against the assaults of modern guns. Eighty shells were thrown into the building by high angle fire in the

SOISSONS—A RETROSPECT

first few days after the enemy was established on the plateau to the north. The bombardment has been continued almost without cessation ever since.

My sketches were made early in July of 1915. Clouds of powdered dust then rose from the ruins and columns of smoke from the burning houses of the neighborhood. As I write this in the late autumn the *communiqué* of the day reports that "the enemy has fired a number of incendiary shells on Soissons and the region round about."

By this time the cathedral is probably completely demolished. In July the interior was a mass of crumpled masonry, choir stalls and *pries-dieu* were covered with débris. The fine stained glass of the Gothic windows was smashed and the tombs crushed in. The choir or north transept showed the greatest injury and there was an enormous hole in the roof of the apse through which a flood of sunlight streamed across a fallen column. Though every stone of it was separate the column still preserved its outline with the carved capital intact like a fallen giant.

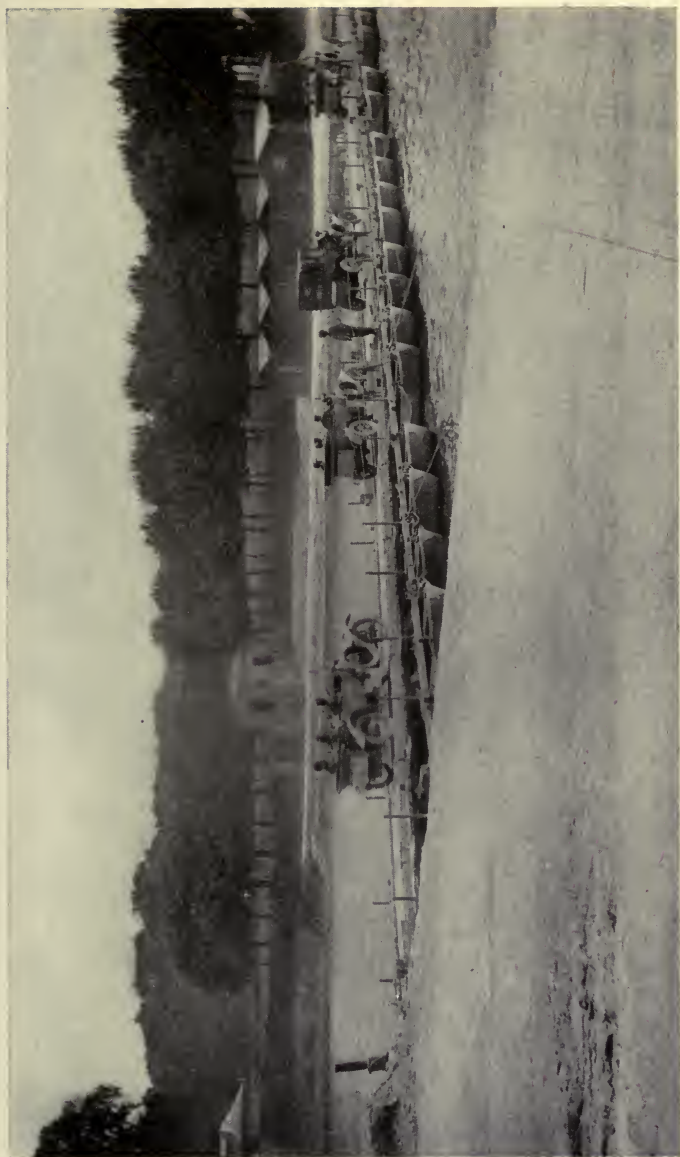
The north façade was plentifully spotted with shot holes, the broken rafters show above the buttresses, the bays of the arches and the shattered

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

pinnacles sticking up like jagged teeth. In the north side there was another enormous hole where the wall was blown out—evidently by a large caliber shell—a “marmite.”

The French resent particularly the devastation of Soissons. In the volume “*Les Allemands destructeurs*,” which is published by the “*Fraternité des Artistes*,” Anatole France says that “the brutal and stupid destruction of monuments consecrated by art and the years is a crime that war does not excuse.” He quotes from a page in “*Autour de Paris*” which touched him to the point of tears. It is a beautiful word picture of the town that was. I quote it here:

“Soissons is a city, white, peaceful, smiling, with its tower and its pointed steeples rising from the banks of a lazy river in the middle of a circle of green hills; city and landscape make one dream of the little picture painted with such loving care by the illuminating artists of our old manuscripts. Precious monuments tell all the history of the French monarchy, from the Merovingian crypts of the Abbey of St. Médard to the fine edifice erected just before the Revolution for the use of the lord-lieutenants of the province. From the



Pontoon bridge across the Oise at Compiègne

SOISSONS—A RETROSPECT

cluster of narrow streets and little gardens, a magnificent cathedral extends skyward the two arms of its great transept; to the north there is a straight wall and a vast window; to the south there is the marvelous apse where the pointed arch and the semicircle delicately mingle."

CHAPTER VI

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO COMPIÈGNE

I WENT to Compiègne alone. At least I thought I went to Compiègne alone. On the platform of the Gare du Nord there was a party of French war correspondents. But they were in charge of a staff officer. I was independent of them. I carried in my pocket my little yellow *laisser passer* and for the first time was making a *tourn  e* by myself. Owen Johnson stayed in Paris to interview Delcass   and Arnold Bennett had an engagement—I was going up to the front, as I thought, under my own personal direction.

I have never seen so long a train. The locomotives were far ahead in the yards. The trains on any of the lines toward the north or east are so infrequent that all are packed. This was the express for Amiens and Boulogne—I had to change at Creil.

Creil, Senlis and Meaux are the nearest points to Paris reached by the Germans on the drive that

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO COMPIÈGNE

was checked at the Battle of the Marne. If you believe any of the many stories that are told you in Paris, however, the lances and helmets of the Uhlan patrols were seen only ten kilometers outside the fortifications.

It was at Creil that I received my first check as an unattended correspondent. A gendarme told me to go to the little ticket window and have my credentials *visés* before I could proceed to Compiègne. I went down under a tunnel and up again. Stretching out of the waiting room from the little window was a queue like the ones waiting to buy tickets for a World Series. Some of the people were sitting patiently on market baskets or valises—the line was so long that only a part of it was within the station—the others stood under the broiling sun outside.

Surely a correspondent with an *authorisation* for the —th Army Corps would not have to wait his turn with all these common people! I thought to circumvent the authorities by doubling back and coming up another stairway. But my friend the gendarme was on the job. This time he led me back to an officer. He explained that I carried a *laisser passer* signed by the Minister of the Bureau

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

des Affaires Etrangères in Paris. The officer could not see wherein that entitled me to any special privileges and back to the tail end of the line I went.

It was market day in Creil and most of the people came from smaller stations along the way to Compiègne. They were very smelly people. In front of me was a woman with a squalling baby. I was surprised to find at my back a peasant dressed in the costume of the Basque countries. A husky butcher edged his way ahead brushing the woman aside. My friend the Gascon protested. It was *malheureuse*, he said. He appealed to the officer who kept the line formed. The officer yanked the offender out and placed him at the rear of the procession. We found a box and made the woman sit on it. The heat was fearful and we progressed toward the window by inches. The people accepted the situation with unconcern. It was the war, they said, and these inconveniences were all "à la guerre comme à la guerre." It was almost train time and I asked the officer if it would wait for us. It would wait, he said, until *tout le monde* had their passes countersigned. The train waited and we left Creil almost an hour late. In the next

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO COMPIÈGNE

compartment to me I noticed an officer with the red and white badge of the staff on his arm.

It was a peaceful landscape through which we passed. The little jerk-water train stopped at every station and on the platforms the farmers' wives and daughters were waiting. There were continual evidences of the fighting last September. There was a large sign with "Heinz's 57 Varieties" shot full of holes, there were stumps of trees sticking above the shrubbery, and old houses sporting new roofs of bright red tile. Stopped at the stations, we could hear the sound of hammering where other roofs were being constructed. A sign of confidence, this effort on the part of the farmers to rebuild their homes, of faith in the army that had swept the Germans back and would never let them pass that way again. Here and there was a house too far gone to be worth rebuilding or a white church tower with the holes in its belfry freshly plastered up. At Longueuil Ste. Marie a wrecked German motor truck covered with rust was lying in the ditch at the roadside close to the station, its rear wheels shot away, the steering gear and motor blown out but the front wheels and radiator undamaged.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

Compiègne is eight miles back of the German lines. It is shelled occasionally to keep the people properly in awe of the marksmanship of the German gunners. But the range is too great, most of the shells have fallen in the famous forest and so far little damage has been done to the town itself. Compiègne got off lightly at the hands of the Germans. They came through triumphant and full of confidence; they made the town the temporary headquarters of an army corps; they were to be in Paris three days later. They paid for what they took and left a good impression. They never came back. The Allies dynamited the Pont Neuf, the large bridge across the Oise, and when the tide turned at the Marne the Germans were forced to cross the Aisne, which flows into the Oise just outside of Compiègne, further to the east.

I left Paris at eight o'clock in the morning. It took me until eleven-thirty to cover the fifty miles to Compiègne, an example of how the train service is disrupted in war times.

I was only a short time realizing that my unattended tour would be confined to the limits of Compiègne. I told my cabman to drive north from the railway station, that I wanted him to take me as

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO COMPIÈGNE

far as possible toward the trenches. He seemed dumbfounded. He called an officer. The officer carefully examined my papers and told me that my *authorisation* was for Compiègne only. I told him that I had already been through the lines at Rheims, Béthany and along the Aisne Valley near Soissons. He impressed upon me politely that whatever privileges had been extended to me by the ——th Army Corps, the ——th Army Corps would hold me to the letter of my *laissez passer*. Another officer appeared. He added that I must under no circumstances attempt to leave the place except by the train back to Paris. The train left each afternoon at three-thirty, and my visit to Compiègne was limited to two days.

Army motors were waiting for the French correspondents. As they drove off I felt deserted. My little tour to the front was not going to be the success I had anticipated. I told my driver to follow them over the pontoon bridge to the town across the river—the bridge that temporarily replaces the one that has been destroyed.

I went first to the ruins of the Pont Neuf to see what the light was like for a drawing. I found I would have to wait until the afternoon. In the

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

meantime I took a number of photographs along the river bank and in the streets that lead away from it. As I returned to the bridge a gendarme stopped me and demanded my papers. I showed him my *authorisation* from Paris and my passport. He seemed to be suspicious of me. He was joined by another gendarme. Didn't I know, they asked, that taking photographs in Compiègne was *défendu* by order of the General commanding? It occurred to me that a little knowledge was a dangerous thing. I pretended not to understand them and, as though it was a phrase I had been taught to say in case I got into trouble, I repeated like a parrot "*telephoné à Monsieur Ponsot à Paris!*" They insisted that my *laissez passer* gave me no permission to take photographs. They asked me if I didn't know that I was liable to arrest and imprisonment for breaking a military regulation.

"*Telephoné à Monsieur Ponsot à Paris.*" "He is too big a fool to be a spy," said one to the other. "We are forced to arrest you and take you to headquarters," they said to me. "*Telephoné à Monsieur Ponsot à Paris,*" I repeated. Suddenly the officer I had noticed in the train from Creil appeared. He said something and they released me. I thanked

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO COMPIÈGNE

him, saluted my erstwhile captors and returned to the hotel for luncheon.

The Palace Hotel, where I had stopped on two of my motor tours was sadly changed—the great château of Louis XV deserted. Gone was the army of sightseers—the “Cookies” up from Paris being escorted about in their open carriages. Gone were the fashionable motors in the inn court-yard, in their places businesslike looking cars in the battleship gray of the army. Gone were the waiters, we were served only by a venerable old man and some boys. Under the ruined arches of the bridge close to the river bank I went to work shortly after luncheon. I wondered if making a drawing was also *défendu*. It probably was, but for a long time I kept at my task unnoticed. The attention of the populace was attracted by a diver who was descending into the river to locate the caissons for the central span of the new bridge. The shaky temporary structure nearby was crowded with people. They seemed intent upon the doings at the bottom of the river. Behind them from time to time an ambulance rumbled across the bridge bringing wounded back from the lines. One of the most important of the base hospitals is located here, under

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

the direction of Dr. Carrel of New York. The ambulances were carrying the harvest from an artillery action on the front to the north. The sullen rumble of guns in action came down occasionally on the wind. The wounded, sometimes with bloody bandages showing through the flapping side curtains of the automobiles, passed behind the people—unnoticed.

What a commentary upon the dull acceptance of war time conditions, I thought, that these ambulances from the battle line should carry their wounded freight across the bridge unnoticed by the crowd that watched a diver descending into the river bed!

It was not until the diver and his assistants had knocked off work that the attention of the townspeople on the bridge was focused upon me. Some of them descended onto the piers and watched me. The sketch was *tres beau*, they said. They beckoned others—among them a British "Tommy." He had brought in two wounded men from the trenches in the morning and was going back to the field hospital with his little auto full of surgical supplies. He was very proud of his car—a Ford. I told him we called them "flivvers." He didn't care, he said,

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO COMPIÈGNE

“ ‘is bloomin’ gig could go anywhere, it could ‘op out of anythink in the battle line except the trenches.” When I thought of the service to humanity this little car was rendering, I could almost forgive the Detroit manufacturer who, according to report, advocates a defenseless country and boasts that only a dozen of his ten thousand employees belong to the State militia.

A battery of artillery shook the bridge. Behind it followed Red-Cross motor trucks and some officers on horses. One is so accustomed to seeing officers dashing up in racing motors that to find them mounted takes one by surprise. Then a regiment of Senegalese crossed at a rapid walk and from the opposite direction came more Red-Cross ambulances. Evidently the action on the front to the north was increasing in intensity. I continued to hold the center of the stage. My audience had become accustomed to military activity but not to a correspondent sketching a ruined bridge.

Attracted by the crowd, two more gendarmes appeared. Again I showed my papers. They were sure photographing was forbidden, but this was a sketch, and they could not fathom my object in wanting to sketch a ruined bridge. “For what pur-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

pose does Monsieur make the drawing of the bridge," they asked. "*Telephoné à Monsieur Ponsot à Paris.*"

My belated visit to the General loomed imminent on the horizon when again my friend of the train appeared. He brushed away the crowd and with it the gendarmes. I finished my work alone.

Back at the square in the center of the town again I stopped at a café for an *aperitif*. When the waiter found I was going back to Paris that night he asked if I would not take his letters and mail them in the city. It was four or five days, in the usual run of events, he said, before they would leave Compiègne. Upon the appearance of my officer of the train at an adjoining table, he changed the subject. When I referred to it later, he placed a warning finger on his lips. He had thought better of it, he whispered, and preferred to run no risk of getting in trouble with the authorities. Probably letters to his sweetheart, but you would have thought he was hatching a plot against the Government.

On the train headed back to Paris with this officer in a nearby compartment, for the first time it began to dawn upon me that I had been under



Protecting with sandbags the Porte de la Vierge Dorée,
Amiens Cathedral

A LITTLE JOURNEY TO COMPIÈGNE

surveillance. It was only coincidence, possibly, although I see no reason why a correspondent with a camera and sketching materials should be allowed to run at large so near the front lines as Compiègne. No one can take issue with the French War Department for doing everything in its power to prevent espionage. It is their own war and they seem to know how to conduct it.

I am sure that after Johnson and I applied for permission to go to the front in Paris our connections in New York were carefully looked up. Had we counted many German-Americans among our acquaintances or been habitués of the German restaurants we would have remained in Paris and our movements watched until we were on our way to Bordeaux to catch the steamer home.

It was a dark, humid night and the streets outside the Gare du Nord were crowded when I came out of the station following my arrival in Paris. The crowd was composed almost entirely of women waiting for the soldiers due home on the four days' "permission" or leave of absence. A surging, expectant crowd was waiting for the short visit allowed to each man at the front. The women have no information about the arrival of the trains, they

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

simply wait on through the long days with patience until they see a familiar face in the crowd coming from the arrival platform. The women of France are used to waiting.

The few taxi-cabs had all been seized. I took the underground and got off at the Opera for a belated dinner at the Café de la Paix. It was ten o'clock and they were just about to close up. But they gave me an *hors d'œuvre*, some cold chicken, salad and a bottle of wine. Imagine the Café de la Paix, the tourists' center of the world, closing at 10.30 P. M.!

It was a hot night and the few taxis usually found in the boulevards were all engaged. I discovered a horse cab in waiting and commandeered it. As we passed "Maxim's" the horse without warning three times lifted his heels and kicked into the dash of the voiture. The cabby lashed him with the whip and cursed him in English. When I asked him where he had learned to curse so roundly in English, he said that for four years he had driven a hack in Brooklyn. With the battered woodwork of the cab clattering on the pavement below, we drove through the black, empty spaces on the Champs Elysées up to the door of my hotel.

CHAPTER VII

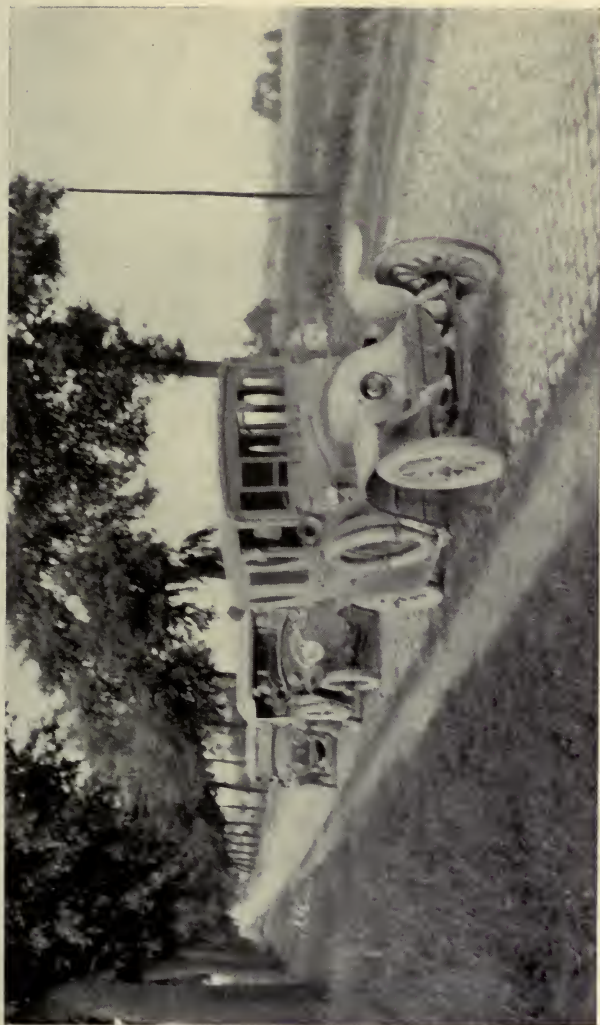
THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

THE trip to the Rheims sector was like a pleasant tour with a spice of warlike atmosphere compared to the sterner realities of the visit to the famous Artois sector and the region about Arras. We left Paris, as usual, by train, and, as usual, with an escort of officers with the red-and-white badge of the staff on their arms. There were few women, few civilians on the train. It was all gold lace and uniforms—officers bound to their different assignments along the great battle line that runs almost due north from Compiègne. The proximity of this battle line was continually in evidence. We passed flat cars loaded with guns, caissons, barbed wire and munitions or box cars filled with commissary supplies. At Creil a long hospital train had just pulled into the station. Men and women of the place passed along the platforms carrying large baskets of ripe cherries which they lifted above their heads that the wounded soldiers might more easily reach them.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

At Amiens we abandoned the train to move up to the front by motor. We had luncheon in the station. There were many English officers and their wives in the restaurant. Amiens is the nearest big town to the right flank of the British line. The Germans occupied it for a few days as their encompassing advance swept out almost to the coast on the march to Paris. Here and there a weather-beaten proclamation in German stared at us from a dead wall—a souvenir of the Uhlan visit—and in the shop windows were post cards showing companies of infantry in long gray coats and spiked helmets encamped in the Place St. Roch. Then came the Marne and the stay of the invaders was cut short, for after the Marne a retreat followed as rapid as had been their advance.

I had been before in Amiens—now I scarcely knew it. The ancient capital of Picardy had impressed itself upon me as being a very busy manufacturing town, of many twisting streets lined with old houses of half timber and moss-covered tiled roofs tilted at a rakish angle, of open boulevards and an excellent hotel with an attractive courtyard and garden. I recollect walking in the moonlight up to the three great portals of the cathedral, with



Our motors held up by shell fire, Route Nationale between Arras and Doullens—July 7

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

their deep and mysterious shadows, and the lofty pinnacles of the towers cutting against the blue above, and refusing to go back in the morning for fear that my first sensation might be effaced. And I carried in my mind the picture of these same twin towers, from a distance, rising above the neighboring chimney pots and gabled roofs, as I motored to the north the next day.

The town seemed completely transformed. Or was it that my first impression, a fleeting one, had become more filmy as time passed? More likely that this first impression was swept away before the bustle and activity attendant upon the movement of men and supplies, the comings and goings of military motors, trucks and ambulances, of khaki-clad British officers with flat caps and swagger sticks, of bearded *poilus* in long coats and baggy breeches that filled the streets with exotic life and color. Be that as it may, the Amiens I had known seemed strangely unfamiliar.

We passed the Cathedral. Long ladders were laid against the three lofty porches of the façade and workmen were piling against them an embankment of sand bags to protect the reliefs and statues. On the south side, the beautiful sculpture

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

that decorates the Porte de la Vierge Dorée was already covered up to the apex of the arch and a white-shirted laborer, tottering on his lofty perch, was putting the final bags in place.

Remembering Rheims and Soissons and the countless small churches in the Aisne valley and the Argonne, Amiens Cathedral is being safeguarded by the authorities as far as possible against the attack of hostile airmen or the destructive fire of the German guns.

A much traveled road, the one to Doullens, its surface rough from the heavy traffic. Here we were in a busier sector than any other we had seen. At Doullens, Captain Y—— of the staff of the ——th Army Corps joined us. Beyond the little village we followed for a time *route nationale* No. 25. I had motored over this same road once before as I drove northeast from Abbeville following the motor Grand Prix of 1908. We kept to it for only a short distance because, for practically all of the thirty-five kilometers from Doullens to Arras, it comes within range of the German guns. A short dash, and we turned off to the left to edge our way forward through protected country byways.



Arras—"At the end of a cul-de-sac, the shells tearing through the narrow street had blown out the walls of a house from beneath its roof"

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

We passed through Lucheux, a little hamlet with a picturesque stone arched gate standing in the roadway.

I had no sooner remarked upon the peasants working in the fields and the farmers' carts in the inn courtyards before both disappeared. In their places were the tents of the farriers' camps, Red-Cross trucks, commissary wagons, military motors, artillery batteries in reserve, repair shops, horses, men and munitions—all the numerous cogs that fit into the vast organization behind the actual fighting line of the army.

Other small villages—Barly, Wauquetin passed. We drove into little valleys and out again or crept along embankments where the road had been cut deeper to afford protection. The distant roar of the German guns and the answering crackle of the French "75's," muffled at first like the warning thunder of an approaching storm, grew louder as we pushed forward.

Our motors advanced in a series of charges, dashing past an open space at cup-race speed, slowing down in a ravine or where the walls at the roadside sheltered us, then shooting ahead again. I was becoming accustomed to these short spurts, but I

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

never ceased to wonder why we were not as likely to run into a shell as to be caught on the wing by one.

A blight had fallen upon the landscape, and the sun had disappeared, when, beyond Dainville, we crept gingerly back to the *route nationale*. At the end of the long white road ahead a fierce bombardment was in progress. Straightened out on the highway, we waited for a signal, and then rushed through the zone raked by the enemy's fire up to the town gates of Arras.

A sentry stepped out of the box at the octroi and demanded the password. The sign-posts of the Touring Club of France, "Doullens 25 kilometers," "Amiens 60 kilometers," still marked the distances along the road, but the blue of the signs was faded, and the lettering indistinct. The tire and chocolate advertisements on the sign-boards lining the roads still remained, scarred with shrapnel and full of shot-holes.

Before considering the evil days upon which Arras has fallen it might be well to recall something of its history and its strategical position in the war. It lies in the center of the much-fought-over battle grounds of the ancient province of Pays d'Artois,

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

of which it was the old time capital. It changed hands many times during the feudal wars of the Middle Ages. After the battle of Agincourt the treaty of peace between the French and English was signed at Arras in 1415. In 1482 the Peace of Arras marked the line of the northern frontier of France.

In the spring of 1709, after Marlborough's winter in northern France, Arras was looked upon as the gate to Paris and with La Bassée, another important position in the present war, was strongly fortified by the French General Villars. In the spring of 1710, after the Great Duke had captured Douai, he marched westward for a second drive against Arras. The town was impreguably fortified by new trenches and for a second time the route to Paris was blocked. Like its unfortunate neighbor to the north—Ypres—it has known bombardment and devastation and its cobbled streets have many times echoed the clank of mailed feet. When the great war broke out it was a prosperous town of about 25,000 inhabitants and a busy commercial center, with a network of railways running northwest to the coast at Boulogne and Calais, to Lens and Ypres on the north and down the valley

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

of the Ancre to Amiens and Paris. Its ancient ramparts were the work of Vauban and it was notable as the birthplace of Robespierre.

The town lies on the northern edge of the plateau which rises above the Somme Valley and extends northward to the flats and dykes about the Scheldt. The lofty belfry of its Hotel de Ville, a beautiful building rising above the arcaded Petite Place, looked out over a peaceful landscape of grain fields and pastures. The gentle hills to the west intervened between the valley and the sea and the long white lines of the *routes nationales* stretched out like the spokes of a wheel through the Picardy countryside. Lombardy poplars in long rows like sentinels protected the roads, with now and then the glint of a stream or a church spire above a mass of woodland. To the north beyond Lens, the Black Country of France begins. The collieries and smoky chimneys remind one of the coal regions of Pennsylvania. Between this distant land of clouds and yellow smoke and the Scarpe at one's feet is the valley that has become in the present war the greatest battle ground in history. It is known technically as the Artois sector.

Within the bowl-shaped hills that envelop it lie

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

Mont St. Eloi, La Targette, Neuville St. Vaast, the *Labyrinthe*, Clarency, Souchez, Ablain St. Nazaire and Notre Dame de Lorette. All these names have become famous in the fighting around Arras.

At the beginning of the Great War, as in Marlborough's campaign, the city played an important part in the military strategy of both sides. After the Germans broke out of Belgium the quick marching Uhlan cavalry, after threatening Boulogne and Montreuil to the west, entered Arras in September. The advance patrol of Maud'huy's —th Army Corps drove them out shortly afterward and forced them back toward Douai. For many days thereafter a stubborn battle raged to the east of Arras. The Germans were reinforced by the Prussian guard under Von Buelow, fresh from the Battle of the Marne. With this help they rolled up the French attack, bent Maud'huy's Corps back toward the west, and commenced the ceaseless bombardment that meant the beginning of the end for the historic monuments of Arras.

The French were reinforced and held the enemy in check. And while the Germans were able to occupy their former position and entrench themselves

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

in the suburbs, up to this writing they have found it impossible to obtain a foothold in the town itself.

After the long Allied line that begins at Ypres and stretches south until it turns eastward above Compiègne was straightened out the heaviest fighting centered about Arras and the surrounding country. The Germans have again and again attempted to drive a wedge through the Artois sector. They have been hammering away with a definite object in view, namely to turn the left wing of Maud'huy's —th Corps and cut off the British army to the north, leaving it with overwhelming German forces in front and only the Channel ports behind it.

The drive has not succeeded. But what of Arras in the meantime? It would take the imagination of Doré to visualize the ruins of the former capital of Artois.

Our advent in Rheims had been accomplished without accident. So, too, our appearance in Arras. But this last was a far different matter. Here a continuous bombardment of the city was in progress. It was a gray day, and the low-hanging clouds seemed to hold the fumes and gases of exploding shells closer to the ground. The firing

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

came apparently from every point of the compass, sometimes in desultory discharges and again in salvos followed by an interval of quiet. The motors did not, as at Rheims, dash through the streets to the center of the town. On the contrary, we nosed our way in carefully, taking advantage of protecting walls and partly ruined houses, turning out to avoid shell holes in the pavement, broken telegraph wires dangling overhead, or the débris of toppled walls and chimneys that littered the streets. We were playing hide and seek with an invisible enemy of whose mighty power the evidence was all about us—in the devastated homes, the blackened rooftrees and chimneys, and the smoking ruins of town hall and cathedral.

The cobbles were strewn with rusty pieces of broken shell, grass grew in the interstices and in the cracks between the paving stones. There was no sign of life—unless you call the clatter of shells overhead a sign of life—until, after leaving the cars in a protected spot, we went to headquarters to pay our respects to the General in command. He was a cheerful stout man—so like General Joffre in appearance that my photograph of him might easily pass for one of the Generalissimo himself.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

He complained of the spies. His headquarters had been moved two days before and already the Germans knew the whereabouts of the staff. In proof of this he showed us a large cavity in the garden at the rear where a "marmite" had exploded that morning. He also showed us a shell hole in the wall of the house—the shell had swept down the cut glass chandelier, loosened the plaster of the walls and demolished a mahogany sideboard and a beautiful mahogany table and chairs. Still undamaged the old rose window—curtains moved gently in the breeze that came in through the opening.

The General took us to his sleeping apartment in the cellar. A very cool and pleasant place, he said, but he had to bolster up with sand bags the grating upon which he depended for light and air because of the flying shrapnel in the street outside.

In a drizzle of rain we crossed a desolate little square. Arras was like a city of the dead; it gave one something of the sensation of walking through the ghostly cairns of Pompeii or St. Pierre Martinique. It was like a giant catacomb and the lowering clouds of yellow smoke hanging like a pall overhead, the deserted streets, the empty shells of



An inn courtyard after bombardment, Arras

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

nouses, the growl of artillery, and the occasional violent detonation when an explosive bomb landed increased the uncanny feeling of death and disaster. In spite of the intermittent crackle of gun fire we unconsciously lowered our voices. A leaning chimney, all that remained of the one-time residence of some prosperous merchant, toppled over as we looked at it. A cloud of dust rose as it crashed into the ruins below. Through the wet blanket of rain, the outlines of broken walls and blackened rooftrees were hazy and indistinct.

At the end of a cul de sac, the shells tearing through the narrow street had blown out the walls of a house from beneath its roof. Beyond the gaunt opening tottering chimneys and blackened rafters showed through the yellow haze in the distance. Underneath in the smoking ruins, window blinds, doors, stairways, old bedposts and bits of furniture were shuffled up with bricks and stones in artistic confusion. Above, the red tiled roof, undamaged and with the little white curtain still hanging in the dormer window, hung suspended like a bridge from the walls on either side. I wondered what a motor car would look like after it had been hit by a shell. A little later I found out.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

There was a sudden lull in the cannonading as though both sides, breathless, had stopped at a given signal. We could hear the echo of our footsteps on the cobbles. We came out into the district of shops. An *épicerie* displayed tins of American canned goods in its broken windows; there was not a whole pane of glass in the city. The grocer conducted his business in the cellar. In a narrow street a few vegetables and some fruit were on sale with little price marks sticking in the trays. Women and small girls were standing at the side of the market carts. It was a pitifully meager market, but the women were undismayed. A little further on we came across a car that had been hit by a shell. It was a low, gray racing runabout of the torpedo type. It had evidently been used by a despatch bearer or as an official car for the staff. The frame of the chassis was broken in the middle, the radiator and bonnet gone, and three of the four cylinders poked themselves above the open crank case. There was only one fender left and a part of the tonneau in the rear—the rest of the machine had been blown to bits against the neighboring wall.

A turn out of the little Rue de Jérusalem brought

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

us up to the cathedral. It had been violently bombarded since early morning. There was an enormous new "marmite" hole in the northern façade, some of the cornices had been shot away and many of the columns were smashed into a shapeless mass of stone. A cloud of tawny smoke rose from the interior; beneath it was the crimson glow of many small fires started by incendiary bombs. Soldiers had laid lines of hose and were playing streams upon the ruins. They might as well have tried to put out Vesuvius. As fast as a blaze would be smothered in one part of the building a bomb dropped and started another somewhere else.

A tired-looking group of townspeople—there are a thousand of its twenty-five thousand inhabitants still remaining—whispered together as they watched the destruction of the cathedral. A priest stood in the rain with bared head.

The devastation was complete in whatever direction we turned. The girders of the enormous steel train shed at the railway station were broken in and every skylight smashed. The arrival and departure platforms were covered with débris and grass three feet high grew over the tracks of one

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

of the greatest railway centers of northern France. In the Rue Gambetta nearby the beautiful Ursuline chapel was badly damaged. Pieces of its tower had been shot away and in its irregular outlines it somewhat resembled an unsteady spiral staircase of stone.

Following the Rue Douai in the environs toward Blangy there is nothing left of the town at all. There was not a house standing intact and only a few of the chimneys. Trees, freshly hewn off as if by an ax, were flung across the streets—everywhere great holes in the cobble stones where the shells had torn up the pavement. One house was gutted, but its green tiled fireplaces, one on top of the other, were as carefully polished as though their owners had just left them. Further out was a little cottage that brought us to a stop with a catch in our throats. Its walls were blown out and in the rear the ceiling of the second floor had fallen over the kitchen range. The front bedroom remained, with its outside wall swiped off; in it were a little white bed, a table with a reading lamp, a pair of slippers, a wardrobe hung with women's clothes, with some hat boxes above. The door jamb underneath was supported by the only part of the front

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

wall still standing. Set in bricks at the side was a neat brass plate with the sign "Madame Houdain, Modes." The story of Madame Houdain would seem to need no further telling.

We were leisurely crossing the square by the railway station when a picket rode out on a bicycle. The open *place* was directly in the line of the German gun fire, he said, and he begged us to hurry. We hurried. The fire arrived with us as we entered the Grande Place. We winced at two loud detonations in the low clouds above and the soldiers in the shelter of the arcade thought it very amusing. It would have been funnier to me had I been under the arches with them.

These arches run completely around the Grande Place—a relic of the Spanish occupation. The troops were bivouacked under them, their guns stacked and the smoke of their mess-stoves rolling out into the mist. They were playing cards or lolling about leisurely until dusk when the time came to relieve their comrades in the trenches just outside the city walls.

Victor Hugo says of Arras: "There are two curious squares with scrolled gables in the Flemish-Spanish style of the time of Louis XIII. In one

of the squares, the smaller, there is a charming town hall of the fifteenth century adjoining a delightful house of the Renaissance."

I well remember the Hôtel de Ville. Its splendid belfry towered above the city and was the first landmark to be sighted as one approached by motor. It was supposed to be the finest Gothic edifice in northern France. At the top of the tower was a crown, below were three bronze clocks, and in the belfry was an enormous bell the people called "La Joyeuse." This was a shining mark for the German guns. After the invaders had been driven out beyond the walls of the town in October, and placed their batteries on the hills to the east, they commenced an endless bombardment of Arras with the belfry of the Hôtel de Ville as the bull's-eye on the target.

The first shell fired at the town hit the tower and little by little it was shot away until it was only slightly higher than the nearby house tops. Military necessity might again be offered here as an excuse, for the top of the tower undoubtedly afforded an unobstructed view of the surrounding countryside; but one must look for a better reason in a war where scouting aeroplanes and captive bal-

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

loons have superseded more stable methods of making observations.

An excuse as logical as any other can be found in the amazing statement of a German officer. Following the shocked protests of the neutral countries after the German devastation during the early days of the Great War, Major General von Ditfurth thus expressed himself in the "Hamburger Nachrichten" of November, 1914:

It is of no consequence if all the monuments ever created, all the pictures ever painted, and all the buildings ever erected by the great architects of the world were destroyed, if by their destruction we promote German victory over her enemies. The commonest, ugliest stone placed to mark the burial place of a German grenadier is a more glorious and perfect monument than all the cathedrals in Europe put together. Let neutral people cease their talk about the cathedrals of Rheims and all the churches and castles in France that have shared its fate. These things do not interest us.

I had been in a way prepared for it, yet the complete destruction of the Hôtel de Ville was a more distressing picture than any I had imagined in my sordid dreams. The irregular arches at the base were still standing, badly cracked, punctured with holes, and covered on the left by huge piles of broken masonry. Of the Renaissance building on

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

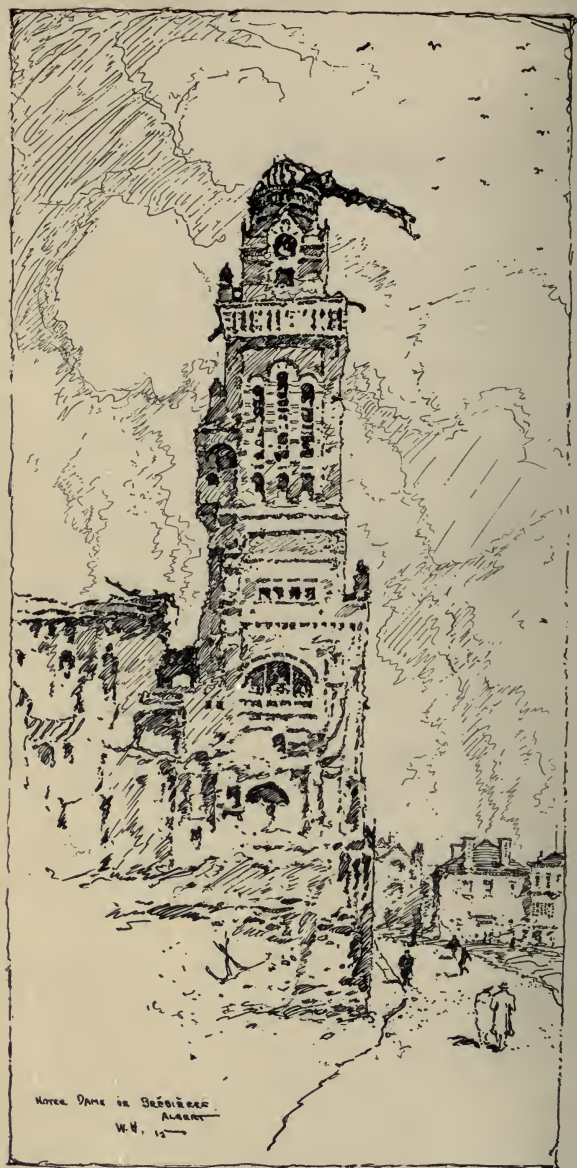
the same side only a single jagged fragment remained—that fell before an *obus* the next afternoon. On the right the building retained something of its former outline, but it was gutted inside and the elaborate details, columns, lintels, arches and portico smashed out of all semblance to their former graceful beauty. A huge pile of powdered white stone was heaped against the lower walls. Against it we found another disabled automobile, evidently struck during the first bombardment. It was not so completely demolished as the first; the tires and upholstery were burned off and the steering gear wrecked, but its headlights still blinked at us uncompromisingly out of the ruins.

There was only a shapeless mass of calcined stone left, like a jagged tooth, to suggest what had been the famous tower in the center. White plastered walls behind, bits of broken furniture and wainscoting burned to cinders, great holes in the masonry, the points of the arches broken and the remnants of the sculpture detail crushed beyond recognition—that was all. It was a ghastly sight.

In all my experience along the front I have seen nothing more complete than the wreck of the *Hôtel de Ville*. Of all the devastation wrought by the

Small, illegible text at the top of the page, possibly a header or title.

Main body of text, consisting of several lines of faint, illegible script. The text appears to be organized into paragraphs, with some lines indented. There are also some faint, larger characters that might be section markers or headings.



Notre Dame de Brébières, Albert

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

Germans there has been no act more wanton than the destruction of this beautiful building at Arras. The American architect Whitney Warren needs no better proof than this of his statement that German Kultur cannot lay eyes upon a beautiful thing—a thing more lovely than any architecture of the Fatherland—and resist the temptation to destroy it.

The rain increased as we stood in the Petite Place, the thunder that followed was almost drowned by the roar of artillery from the German and French positions to the east and the occasional explosion of a shell against the gabled houses. I began a sketch from the left arcade, but there was a sentry after me in a moment. It was a "*mauvais côté*," he said, and he pointed to the marks of shrapnel on walls and window shutters and to the flagstones littered with fragments of shell. Later, from a more sheltered spot beneath the arches at the far side of the square we saw a bomb swipe off the tiles and part of the chimney of that same old gabled house. It was, as the sentry had said, a "bad side."

Blangy is a suburb of Arras. I have never before seen the name in print, but whenever I read

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

in the brief *communiqué* that there has been "hard fighting with grenades and counter-mining in the neighborhood of Arras," I think of Blangy. We crept gradually up to it late in the afternoon. The *boyau*, or communicating trench, commenced in the rear of a very-much-shot-up factory building on the edge of the town. So gradually we approached, in fact, that we were well within the trenches before we realized that we were in the actual front line.

We encountered soldiers coming out after what might be called a hard day's work. Others followed us in carrying long poles on their shoulders, suspended from the middle of the pole a steaming earthen pot of soup for the evening meal. There were others with pickaxes, intrenching tools and sand bags to bolster up a threatened spot. The air was charged with moisture, and as we stumbled forward—the trenches were rough and slippery with mud—we were sprayed with drops of water from the red poppies hanging over the edge of the long ditch. At irregular intervals, either ahead or behind, my ears caught a muffled sound like the spit of a firecracker exploding on a wet pavement. This was the report of the modern French rifle.

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

It seemed a very mild affair when I thought of the kick and heavy detonation of the Springfield "45" of my militia days. There was little noise, no smoke.

The trenches were exceedingly roomy and they were so high that we could keep well below their upper crust without stooping. We felt secure and reasonably well protected; it seemed incredible that only a short distance away prying German eyes were watching the line for the slightest movement.

As we emerged from the *boyau* we had to bend nearly double; then some dead walls intervened, and we could stand upright again. There was more whining of shells as we followed a circuitous route, taking advantage of a hedge or a garden wall wherever possible, up to the brewery at Blangy. At this point, I believe, the trenches are closer together than at any other in the long line from the Vosges to the Channel. To be exact, they are twenty yards apart. The Germans occupy a small out-building, the French all the rest of the establishment. It is the only recorded case where the Germans ever occupied a brewery and then were forced to give it up again. When they were driven outside the walls of Arras they fell back on

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

Blangy. Bit by bit they yielded in the street fighting, the lines so close together that the German artillery, enveloping Arras on three sides, was powerless to come to the aid of its infantry.

With hand grenade or bayonet the enemy was backed out of Blangy until (on this visit of July 7th) he was clinging by his toes to the battle-scarred out-building in the far corner of the brewery. These brewery buildings are like a Chinese puzzle—a confusion of vats, store rooms, sub-cellars, broken walls, rafters burned to a crisp, sand bag entrenchments, corrugated iron bomb proofs, ditches and crumpled brick and stone. Such a maze it is that the French themselves do not know it. The field hospital is in a protected spot in a sub-cellar behind a brewer's vat. For the benefit of those who carry the wounded, at every doubtful turning the way to it is marked on the walls by a red cross with a red arrow beneath it.

Near the far end of the brewery is an old house. The dormer window is blown out, leaving a gaping hole, and the tiles on the roof shot off. We climbed up to the garret by a broken stairway littered with discharged cartridges and broken bits of plaster. We stooped low, to avoid being seen as we passed

THE BELEAGUERED CITY OF ARRAS

the opening where the dormer window had been. A soldier had cut a larger hole in the interstices between the boarding. Through it we could glimpse a gray ditch sixty yards away, wagons in the ditch as a barricade—these were the trenches of the enemy—shell-torn houses on each side, a clump of trees beyond and round white puffs of shrapnel hanging close to the hills in the distance. There was no sign of life in the German line, but you had a mysterious feeling that thousands of unseen eyes were watching you. Then, apparently without the slightest excuse, for there was no one at all in sight, there would be the spit of a rifle in the French trenches at our feet.

I carefully poked my camera through the hole between the boarding and pressed the bulb. Then we dived under the opening where the dormer window had been, and quietly made our way down the rickety stairway.

A little further on we reached the point where the French and German lines almost meet. There was a hush over everything. We were cautioned to whisper and to walk on tiptoe. The sand bag barricades somehow gave us an abnormal sense of protection. There were, to be sure, the desultory

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

reports of rifle fire from both sides and occasionally a soldier immediately in front of us would launch a hand-grenade, just as a boy would swing a crab apple off the end of a stick. Beyond the topmost line of the trench a shattered gable, with skeleton chimneys and blackened rafters, showed through the drizzle of rain. This was the German line—not further away than the width of a city street, so close that we felt almost as though we could reach out and touch the enemy. The *poilus*, with their heads against the butts of their rifles, were alert and watchful. But I experienced a greater feeling of security here than in the garret with the narrow slits between the boards and the open space where the dormer window had been.

CHAPTER VIII

BACK OF THE FRONT—DOULLENS AND ALBERT

As the afternoon wore on we tiptoed out of the brewery at Blangy. We walked as though we were walking on eggs. Beneath us were subterranean passages leading up to the enemy's works, and, for aught we knew to the contrary, beneath us were other subterranean passages leading from the enemy's works up to *us*. This tiptoeing over a mined area is an uncanny experience. The intrepid officer who had us in charge explained the necessity for it. He said that heavy footfalls or the stamping of feet might betray the exact position of the French trenches to German sappers burrowing toward them underground.

Imagine night duty in this region of mines and counter mines—not knowing when a fuse in an underground tunnel may be touched off under your feet preparatory to a general advance! And imagine living day in and day out so close to the enemy that he might as well be living in the same

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

house with you—so close that neither side dare search the positions with its artillery for fear of getting its own men!

I thought of this as our escort, gallant, calmly resourceful, having brought us safely to the outskirts of Arras, stopped and saluted. We clicked heels, saluted, wished him "*bon chance*" and he returned to his post in the brewery at Blangy. Through deserted streets and shell-pitted walls we made our way back to the waiting motor cars. The artillery fire from the enveloping slopes had dropped to an occasional desultory report as we silently slipped out of the city through the mist.

Men who daily risk their lives under the murderous fire of modern artillery for twelve hours out of the twenty-four look naturally upon the driving of a motor car at cup-race speed as a pleasant relaxation. Our rush back to Doullens from Arras was an appropriately exciting finish to an eventful day. We had left the whining shells behind us. Traveling at a speed of from fifty to sixty miles an hour, our limousine rocked about like a ship in a gale. What though the roads be crowded with commissary wagons and other traffic back of the front! We seldom slowed up. In one place we darted



The Rue du Bourg, Doullens

BACK OF THE FRONT

through an opening between two carts with a six-inch clearance on either side. At the time we were doing just under sixty miles an hour, and those of us in the rear seats had pushed up the rug on the floor of the car in our individual efforts to apply the brakes. But our military chauffeur was as unconcerned as though he had been edging his way slowly through the traffic of Fifth Avenue.

The guide books give Doullens a population of over 6,000. Since the early days of the war this number has been vastly increased if one considers the various repair shops and depots for munitions established in the neighborhood and the great number of troops billeted upon the town itself and the villages close by. It is an important point for the distribution of commissary supplies and the movement of reserves, for the *route nationale* from the coast to Arras and the highway leading north from Amiens to St. Pol cross here. It was on the ancient post road from Paris to Calais. This is the route followed by "The Three Musketeers" in Dumas' romance, when d'Artagnan made the flying trip from Paris to London to recover the Queen's jewels from the Duke of Buckingham. Dumas sent him from Paris to Calais by galloping steed in little more

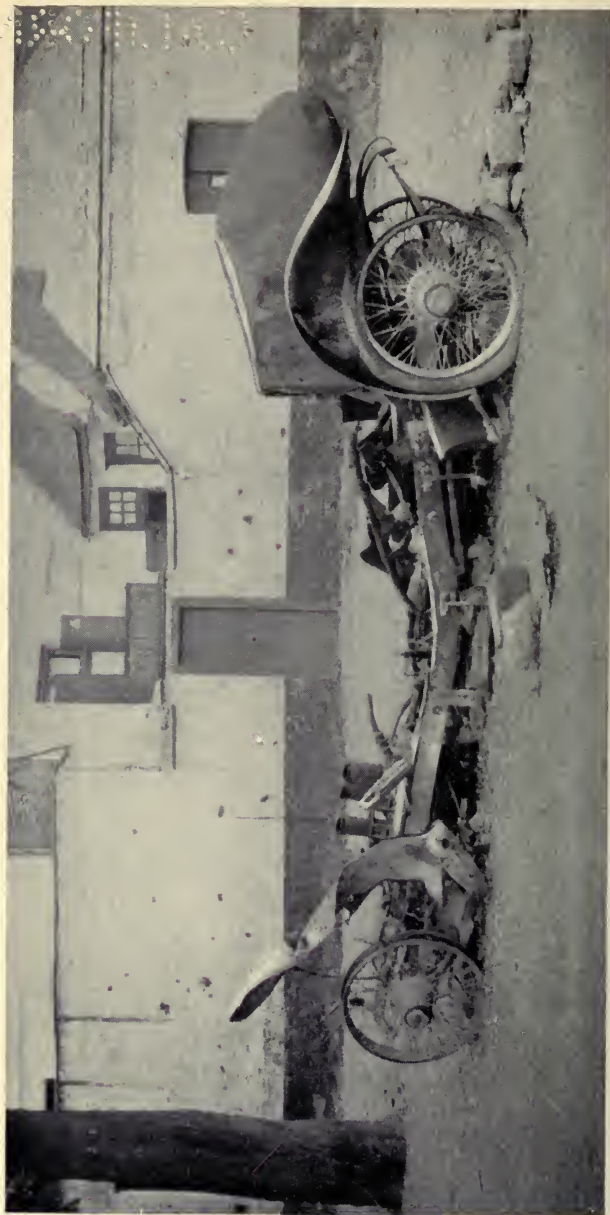
BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

time than it takes nowadays to cover the distance by automobile. This was before the time when a writer of fiction had to consider road conditions and railway schedules in planning his hero's exploits. But modern motorists—if they were well advised—eschewed the Amiens-St. Omer route in favor of the one to the west through Abbeville and Boulogne.

Doullens is a flat little place with an ancient citadel and a Town Hall of more recent date. The tower of the Town Hall terminates in a peculiar slate-covered cupola. In some of the narrow side streets are picturesque half-timbered houses and there is a weatherbeaten stone church of the fifteenth century on the Rue du Bourg. In these war times the streets are dusty and dirty—there is none of the spick-and-span toy-town appearance here one finds in the French villages further away from the front.

General Foch established his headquarters in the town while directing the movement that drove the Germans out of Arras and pushed them back on the hills to the east.

During the stay of our party of correspondents in the famous Artois sector, we went each day as



Motor car destroyed by a shell, Arras. (Photo by French Government)

BACK OF THE FRONT

close as possible to the first-line trenches by automobile. The final stages of the trip were always accomplished on foot. Each night we returned to Doullens and divided ourselves between its two quaint little hotels. The names of the hotels are at least unusual. In one of them, the "Hotel Quatre Fils Aymon," we all messed. Those of us who could not find accommodations there were quartered at the "Hotel des Bons Enfants." The latter was dirtier—naturally, since it was the more picturesque. It harbored more flies than I have ever seen in a small hotel before. But we of the "Enfants" didn't mind. We were so fagged out at the end of each day that our hard beds were of down, the bolsters soft pillows and our tallow dips might have been tungsten lights for all we saw of them in the short time it took to undress.

Thirty kilometers away from Doullens is the little town of Albert. It was not a tourist center and was unknown to travelers except for the few pilgrims that came to worship at the shrine of Notre Dame de Brébières. The shrine was bombarded by the German guns in the early months of the war, and the story of the statue of the Virgin that crowned the belfry is known all over France.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

Time was when a narrow-gage railroad followed the road from Doullens to Albert. Now the narrow-gage railway is abandoned and the road between the two places is one of many turnings and sudden hills. It crosses the plateau between the Authie and the Ancre.

The little Roman-Byzantine church of Notre Dame de Brebières is an old building recently restored. In its restoration it was entirely redecorated. It was noted in the neighborhood because it had an imposing basilica and a high tower surmounted by a golden statue of the Virgin holding the Child. The town lies some three kilometers to the west of the battle front. A small manufacturing place on a river bank near a pretty waterfall, it would not, in the ordinary course of events, have been singled out as a center of military activity. Shortly after the first bombardment of Albert commenced, it was noticed that the church of Notre Dame, instead of becoming the usual target for the enemy's artillery, was miraculously escaping untouched.

The rest of the town, factories, shops and houses, bit by bit was swept by the German guns. Whenever a movement of troops in *camions*, or motor

BACK OF THE FRONT

trucks, commenced, the enemy was aware of it; whenever a yellow motor car, apparently containing staff officers, came into the town the streets through which it passed were sprinkled with shrapnel. A spy, no less. And naturally he was posted in the most conspicuous position in the place—the belfry of the church tower. From this vantage point he signaled any event of military importance in the streets below to the German batteries in the hills above the Somme Valley at Suzanne.

The fate of the spy can be imagined. He had continued his activities unnoticed until the end of October. The townspeople are not quite sure of the date of his passing, but they all know that after the beginning of November the fire of the German guns was concentrated on the church of Notre Dame de Brebières. Albert, as we motored to the town from the Acheux road on the northwest, presented the same picture of devastation that marks the progress of German arms throughout the valleys of northern France. We drove into the Grande Place. I had never seen the Grande Place before. It had evidently been the typical square of the smaller towns of Artois and Picardy. A bandstand in the center, a few half-timbered houses scat-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

tered among the commoner ones of brick and stone, dormer windows with pinnacles pushing themselves out of the tiled roofs and, dominating the open space, the lofty belfry of the church.

Now many of the houses were shells. There were the same blackened timbers and skeleton-like roof-trees, the same deserted streets that you become accustomed to in all the villages close to the front. If, through the activities of the spy in the belfry, Notre Dame was immune at first, it has been badly battered since. The German gunners evidently tried to make up for lost time. Its buttresses are broken down, heavy projectiles have swept the basilica, smashed the altar and crushed the vaulted dome of the transept. All of the stained glass windows are broken. The sacristy is blown in and the organ pipes lie in a twisted mass among the débris.

An *obus* struck the golden Virgin on her lofty perch. She toppled over, but instead of falling hung suspended at right angles over the empty space below. In her outstretched hands she still held the Divine Child. She was offering It to the people of Albert, they said. And they came to stand under the tower and to gaze wonderingly up-



Effects of shell fire and explosive bombs over the great portals of Arras Cathedral

BACK OF THE FRONT

ward. For a long time she remained at this curious angle until another shell brought her to earth. The golden Virgin no longer dominates the surrounding countryside. But her dramatic appeal has stirred the imagination of the people of Albert, and the violation of the sanctuary has aroused a greater feeling of resentment than any other act of wilful destruction in the valley of the Ancre.

Johnson brought with him from Paris some packages that Madame X—— was sending to her husband, the General. His headquarters were somewhere in our sector. We were at dinner the second night at Doullens. It was a very good dinner after a trying day. We messed in a private room at the Quatre Fils Aymon, and for a special servant we had a small maid. She was rather embarrassed at having to serve, as she thought, so many distinguished strangers. She got away with the earlier courses, the soup in its big tureen and a "trout of the river." But she was overcome when it came to serving the wine. The landlady—she was *patron*, chef and boots, there were no men about the place—had produced musty bottles from the cellar. No one seemed to know how long they had been there, certainly not the landlady. The wine was of

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

an unknown vintage. But to have it ordered by one of the distinguished guests was something of an event. The maid tried to serve it in wicker baskets. But there were no wicker baskets. The corks were stubborn, they refused to be drawn. In her efforts the contents of the bottles were being shaken up. At this point she was demoted as *sommellier* and with a face red with confusion she disappeared in the direction of the kitchen to fetch another course. She is probably still thinking of the handsome officer who volunteered to shoulder some of her responsibilities.

Just after the little maid had retired a motor drove into the courtyard with a loud crackle of explosions from its open exhaust. It was a messenger sent after the packages Johnson had brought from Paris for General X——. The messenger appeared in the doorway in the person of Caro Delvaille, the painter. It was an extraordinary meeting. He and Johnson had known each other in Paris and New York, and before the war broke out Del Vaille was at work on some portraits in St. Paul. He spoke affectionately of St. Paul and of my friends there. Like Hofbauer, he wondered if he would ever see America again. He was dressed

BACK OF THE FRONT

in the uniform of an infantry private, with the insignia of the Legion of Honor on his breast. I can think of nothing that would better show the democracy of the French army than this little dinner party—two staff captains, a lieutenant, a *sous lieutenant*, a corporal, a private, and—though we didn't count so much—two English and three American correspondents.

The room was full of smoke when Delvaille rose to go. He opened the window. It was a pitch-black night with an occasional glare of light from the rockets in the direction of Arras. Then the motor drew up at the doorway, he took his packages, saluted and went out into the night. We could hear the chug of his motor growing fainter as he drove off into the darkness.

We of the "Hotel of the Good Infants" could get no *confiture* with *petit déjeuner* in the morning. There was not even a small boy to be sent for it. So we went ourselves. We sought out a little grocer and bought a jar of home-made honey. The grocer waited on us in his uniform, his coat tails caught back, his red trousers tucked in his boots, his *kepi* for the time being on a shelf. He was very simple about it. He was a Territorial. His com-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

pany was stationed in the neighborhood, and when he was off duty he put rifle and bayonet aside to resume his place behind his counter.

The proprietor of a café in Paris was in civilian attire when we left him one night. In the morning we found him in full marching equipment. In his hands he carried a paper package containing waffles. The *specialité* of his café was waffles, and he was going to leave these for some friends in the hospital before he took train back to the front. These sons of the people jump in and out of their uniforms and attend to the serious business of killing men and to their own small affairs with equal unconcern. Which is probably one of the reasons why the whole world has been amazed at the way France has shown her claws in the Great War.

When we entered the shop of the fighting grocer the streets of Doullens were deserted except for a few market carts turning out of the Rue du Bourg. When we came out there was a complete transformation. An endless procession of motor trucks was passing through the street, each one carrying from twenty to forty soldiers. They kept their regular company distances, the officers and orderlies at the flanks in smaller cars or voiturettes. They came by



A motor car destroyed by shell fire in the ruins of the
Hôtel de Ville, Arras—July 7

BACK OF THE FRONT

in clouds of dust, company after company, battalion after battalion, regiment after regiment. In general appearance the trucks all looked alike, wooden seats along the sides, dusty green curtains, a top like a prairie schooner, and the regimental number painted on the tailboard. The motors were of all makes. I felt a little homesick when I noticed our own familiar marks on many of the bonnets in the long procession—Whites, Kelly-Springfields, Packards, Garfords. The line seemed never-ending. The *poilus* hung over the tailboards and joked with the crowd on the sidewalk. They were all moving up to the front with the same cheerful spirit of adventure we had noticed among them everywhere. They begged me to take their photographs. I suppose they should have sung "Tipperary." I never heard "Tipperary" sung at all during my experience in the French lines.

The last of the ammunition and commissary trucks bringing up the rear rounded the turn and disappeared behind the houses. The long procession had somehow reminded me of a circus parade—without the horses. The clouds of dust rolled away. The market carts came back into the Rue du Bourg, and Doullens settled back into the ordi-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

nary business of the day. In the comparatively short space of two hours 20,000 men had passed through the town. Where they had come from or whither they were going we knew not. With rapidity and celerity an army division had been changing position. Silently it had rolled through the streets and as silently vanished. There was no neighing of horses, no champing of bits, no marching footsteps on the cobbles, no sound of trumpet or drum. Only the rhythmic purr of the throbbing motors and the steady deadened rumble of rubber-shod wheels. We had been witnessing an exhibition of the utility of the motor truck in warfare. Mightier than the chariots of the Cæsars, as relentless as the thrusts of Napoleon, was this forced march by the modern method of transportation.

CHAPTER IX

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

THE roads seemed rather deserted as our small procession—pilot car, three others, and an empty one in reserve—left Doullens by the *route nationale*. We followed our former road as far as Lucheux; we again passed under the ancient town gate, around the château, and then branched off to the north.

Early in the morning, at Doullens, we had seen a division of reserves moving up to the front in motor-trucks. At Avesnes le Comte we passed a regiment returning after its duty in the trenches. One was all spirit and buoyancy and enthusiasm, the other all spirit—everywhere you notice this same exaltation among the French troops—but the faces of the men were worn, and they marched with leaden steps. In the van was a battery of “75’s,” the artillerymen in slickers and capes—it was another rainy morning—behind it a file of pack-mules, with the various parts of a mi-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

trailleuse—barrel, tripod, shield, and ammunition-boxes—strapped on their backs. An officer stopped and saluted us. His men were very tired, he said. The usual shift is three days in the trenches and three days at the rear to rest and sleep; but they had been fighting in an exposed position at the front for nearly six days without relief. They had come twenty kilometers since daybreak, and there were still five to march to the village upon which they were billeted. He gave a command. Trumpets were whipped out, and with the drums beating, the tired *poilus* bucked up, and the regiment swung through the narrow street to that fine old marching-song of the French army, "Sambre et Meuse."

It was the only music I ever heard at the front. In times of peace I had known it wherever troops were quartered—in Avignon, Vernon, Angoulême, and Nancy. It revived old memories. How little I thought in my motor tours that I should hear it again so close to the lines where France and Germany were at grips in the greatest war in history!

Again we turned north by a small country road. We crossed the *route nationale* connecting Arras and St. Pol, and breasted a rise above Aubigny.



A snapshot from the garret of the brewery at Blangy. The German lines are 60 yards away in the ditch between the ruined outbuildings

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

The town lay down in a little valley, a soft haze dimming the outlines of its houses and the ruined tower of its old gray church. The whole sweep of the plain unfolded itself from time to time as we skirted a ridge—Mont-St.-Eloi on its wooded slope, Carency, Souchez, Neuville St. Vaast. We seldom appeared in the open; the chauffeurs knew all the turns in this labyrinth of byways, and took advantage of every ridge and knoll and gully.

It was exceedingly hot; we had left the showers of the early morning behind us. The sun shone out of a cloudless sky, but a humid mist clung close to the earth and blurred the landscape. It would have been hard to locate each battle-scarred little village except for its ruined church tower. The towers—what was left of them—rose protectingly above the adjoining rafters. Sometimes they were calcined white by the flames, sometimes smashed into picturesque remnants by the unerring marksmanship of the enemy's gunners. What a harvest of ruined churches marks the advance of the German hosts into France!

The stretch of road that crosses the plateau of Bouvigny is directly under the fire of German batteries on another slope to the north. Any doubt

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

that we might have had about this was dispelled when, at the little village of Bouvigny, a dragoon stepped out and halted us. He still wore the helmet with its horsehair plume, but the helmet was covered with khaki, so that it might not shine in the sunlight. Our objective point, the Bois de Bouvigny, a mass of woodland, lay two kilometers ahead, across the crest of the plateau. The cuirassier lined the cars up and then clicked off the minutes on his wrist-watch like the starter of the Vanderbilt Cup race and sent us away at five-minute intervals. Cars that distance apart would not kick up the amount of dust nor offer the same target to the enemy that would have been afforded had our four motors crossed together in single file.

Johnson and Captain Y—— went first; I followed with Bennett and Captain X——; Roberts and Mair came five minutes later with two other officers. Bennett and I were in the big Renault. I had never before traveled so fast in a motor; I never remember seeing a motor go so fast except in a cup race. We had all safely made the dash across the open space before the German observers discovered us.

Running the gantlet across the zone of fire was

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

an exciting experience to us. We all breathed more easily after it had been accomplished. Some one spoke of it after we had reached the cool and shady recesses of the Bois.

Then they showed us the "Baby Peugeot." To the driver of this little machine, who had been making the run almost daily since the French forces occupied the position last November, it had become as much a routine task as the carrying of letters by a rural free-delivery postman in an out-of-the-way district at home.

The "Baby Peugeot" takes the place of the old-fashioned despatch-bearer of the war melodramas. No more of your orderly dashing up to headquarters and pulling his foaming horse back on his haunches while he delivers an unintelligible message to the commander-in-chief. Now the orders that cannot be sent by telephone or wireless are intrusted to the despatch-bearer in his little racer. It is painted dark gray, hangs close to the road, and runs like the wind. The French prefer this type of *voiturette* to the motor-cycles commonly used by the British.

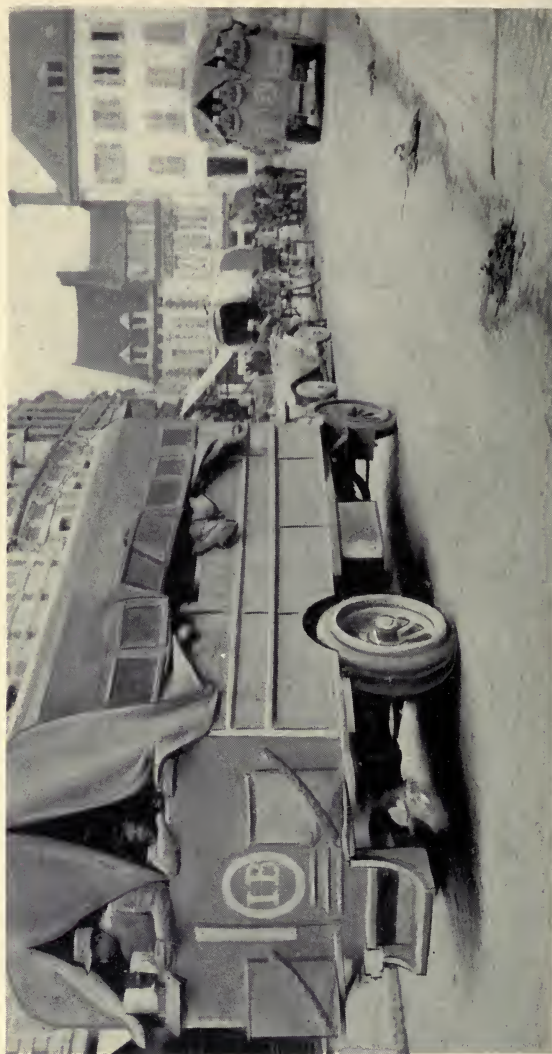
Two German prisoners captured early in the morning had been brought up to the Bois de Bou-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

vigny. They were soldierly looking chaps, and they evidently felt their position keenly. As they sat in the half-light of the men's quarters, Johnson and Roberts tried to talk to them in German. There was a question who were the most embarrassed, Johnson and Roberts or the German prisoners.

There is a little narrow-gage railway running through the woods. It has sidings and switches, and the small flat-cars are pushed by hand. It leads from the telephone centrals, stables, mess-rooms, and "garage for automobiles" (so reads the sign) to the *boyaux*, or communicating trenches that lie beyond the edge of the Bois. Down the little railway they carry ammunition to the men at the front, and back on the flat-cars they carry the wounded. On the one trip they sow the seed, and on the other they bring back the harvest.

The first impression of this wood of Bouvigny is one of absolute quiet. Heavy foliage hangs overhead, and there is a refreshing coolness in the shadows. The bomb-proofs, arsenals, and wattled barricades are of the general color of their surroundings, and would be hard to detect by a scouting aeroplane. As in the other artillery positions we



Movement of an army division by motor transport through Doullens—morning of July 9

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

had seen, the stables and dugouts are hidden by freshly cut green saplings.

As we walked through the woods to the *boyaux* there was only the muffled sound of guns; an artillery engagement was taking place some distance away in the valley near Souchez. Suddenly, without warning, there was the loud roar as of an express train crossing a trestle. It was followed by another and another as German shells of large caliber swept by over our heads. A column of smoke rose where one struck among the trees in the distance. Later we saw the hole it had excavated. Not far away was an arsenal in a sub-cellar, with a sheet-iron roof. It did not increase one's sense of security to picture the fireworks that would follow had it landed among the bombs and high explosives in the arsenal. A few seconds after the Germans opened, the reply came from a battery of "75's" on another hillside. These shells too passed over our heads, and for a while the cool, green forest echoed the thunder of the rival batteries.

A number of officers had joined us to go down into the advance trenches. They are always eager for an excuse to see what is doing on the firing line. We passed many graves in the shadows. At every

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

one we stopped and saluted. As we gained the open there were many more graves, but they were not so well cared for. The *boyau* led down a slight incline. On the open hillside at the edge of the Bois de Bouvigny the ground was an indescribable mass of wattled barriers, barbed-wire entanglements, shell-pits, *chevaux-de-frise*, knapsacks, spiked helmets, and occasionally a suggestive boot-leg upturned toward the sky. We were now on the *grand éperon* of Notre Dame de Lorette, which has witnessed some of the bitterest fighting of the war. Here and there among the débris beyond the trenches were little signs on sticks, with a warning for sappers and grave-diggers: "Look out! Live shell!" They marked the place where bombs had fallen, but had failed to explode in the spongy earth. The sun beat down on the open space, and the watchful soldiers in their heavy gray-blue overcoats and full equipment looked uncomfortably hot. The French trenches were constructed as if to withstand a long siege. They were braced with timbers and sandbags; there were many caves and underground shelters for the men, bomb-proofs, and the usual zigzags that may be used in flanking as well as in a frontal attack.

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

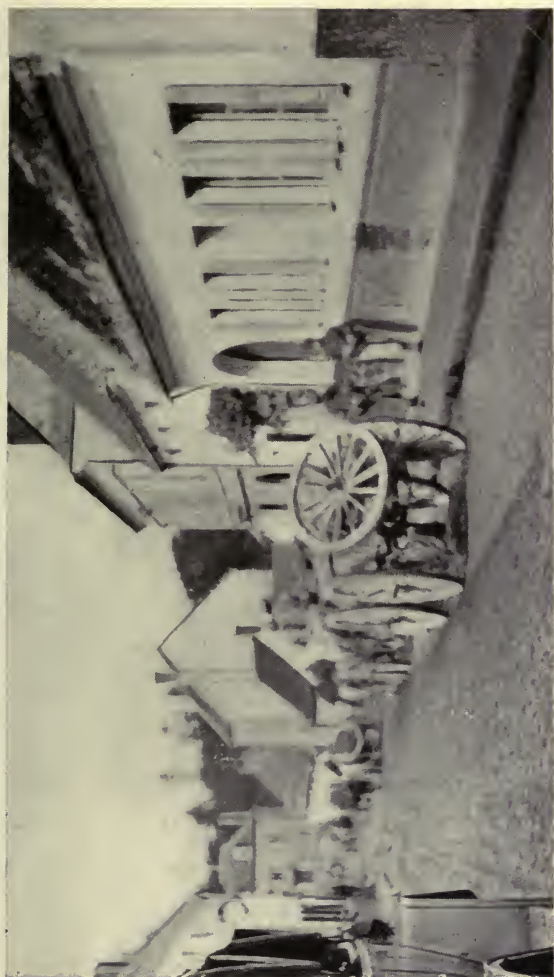
At the point of one of the salients was a small observation-platform. It was supported by pieces of sapling. An officer, squatting on the rough boards, was directing with the aid of a periscope the fire of one of the batteries in the rear. To and fro in the traverses we scrambled, ducking our heads at occasional openings. The order came to stoop low. We crawled out of the French lines, and, aided by the slight haze that still clung close to the earth and hid our movements from the enemy's observers, made our way gingerly across the open space on the hillside up to the battered trenches captured from the Germans two weeks before.

The change was so abrupt that it seemed like stepping from one country to another. The character of the trenches was entirely different. Instead of being bolstered with sandbags, they were shored up with timbers, many of which had been smashed by shell-fire. With a constant rain of shells all day and all night, there had been no chance to clean up. Parts of bodies, boots, hands, or blood-stained underwear, hung out of the earth walls of the ditch. In some cases the dead had been simply pitched out on the bank and partly covered with

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

dirt and chloride of lime. Black clouds of flies swarmed everywhere, and the stench was intolerable.

All the hillside is now in the hands of the French. They have gained at the rate of a hundred yards a month since March 1, and in the last attack, the one of which we were seeing the gruesome evidence, they pushed the enemy out of his second line of defense and forced him across the Carency valley beyond Ablain St. Nazaire. At a certain point of the captured German line, on what is called the lower *éperon*, was a small cannon, its muzzle just raised above the emplacements, and covered with brown canvas to take off the reflection of the sun's rays. Beyond was the site where once had stood the pretty chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette, with a view commanding the entire valley. The wide expanse beyond the smoking ruins was formerly a smiling hillside covered with trees and green turf. Now it seemed like a fragment of one of Doré's drawings for Dante's *Inferno*. Trees were gone, grass was gone, there were only rocks and stones and the never-ending ridges where shells had plowed through the sod. A heap of crumbled stone and brick where the chapel had stood; a white stone,



A battery of "75's" passing through Avesnes-le-Comte

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

evidently a corner-stone, with "N. D. de Lorette" on it, showed through the débris.

I can imagine no more impressive preachment against the mighty powers that were unloosed when the Great War broke out than the grisly landscape that surrounds the ruins of the chapel from this farthest salient on the *grand éperon*. Under the broken rocks and the fresh-cut furrows one felt the writhings of some unseen power. It was as though a tortured monster beneath was slowly breaking through the earth's crust. There were fragments of guns, of bloody shirts and tunics, spiked helmets and red caps, a skeleton hand sticking above the edge of a great pit torn out by a "marmite," craters where shells had exploded and exhumed the dead—a giant caldron constantly stirred by the pitiless fire from the German guns across the valley. Not a leaf, not a small stretch of turf, in sight, nothing but brown earth and devastation, and over all soft, white clouds moving lazily across a gray-blue sky.

We had nearly completed the circle around the hillside when Captain Y—— scrambled out of the ditch to show us the irregular, white German line in the valley below and the position of one of the

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

enemy's batteries on a wooded slope above. To do this, he exposed the upper part of his body above the trench. An observer in the German line telephoned back to the battery. The guns opened fire a minute later, the first shell—shrapnel—apparently exploding over the heads of Johnson and the others in our vanguard. I had only time to hope that they had escaped before the Germans opened with guns of larger caliber, and dense clouds of black smoke rose where they exploded against the side of the hill or in the trees beyond. Lieutenant T—— left the others and came running back to announce, with a chuckle and an evident show of relief: "*Personne de blessé! Personne de blessé!*" I thought with what sepulchral seriousness the officers in a military play would have said, "Thank God! nobody wounded!"

Captain X—— urged us to step faster. The nearest bomb-proof shelter was half a kilometer away and we had to make a run for it. It was one thing to feel that you were an infinitesimal unit within a great zone of fire; it was another to know that you were the definite target at which shells were being directed with all the deadly precision of modern military science.



Shrapnel and shell, Bois de Bouvigny, July 8

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

Again with the warning roar of an express train a shell hurtled by so close above our heads that we could feel the onrush of air and the hot breath of it. An irresistible impulse made us raise our heads above the near side of the trench to watch the crimson flare and the mass of earth and stone thrown up by the explosion.

The surface of the trench was very rough, and there were many loose stones. I stumbled and fell over my camera and sketching tools. An obliging private rushed up and put me on my feet again. Dodging and clinging close to the near side of the trench whenever the scream of a shell announced its approach, we made slow progress. After the continual sprinting and dodging, I was completely winded. I could run no farther, not if all the shells in the ammunition-cases on the distant slope fell directly in my path. At the time I felt no emotion beyond a mild resentment against the Germans who had made me run so far when I was out of condition. I pulled myself together, and with a feeble show of dignity walked deliberately, blowing like a porpoise, up to the bomb-proof where the others had taken shelter.

When the German fire had slackened and finally

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

died away, we edged our way cautiously through the last half-furlong of the first-line trenches, and crept into the grateful shadow of the Bois de Bouvigny. Woods never looked cooler or more inviting. We had luncheon in the *faisanderie*, in the little dining-room of the gamekeeper's lodge. There were lithographs and wood-cuts of religious subjects on the walls. The pictures were all askew, and the plaster was cracked from the concussion of a shell that had exploded outside without doing any further damage. The menu included hard-boiled eggs, cold meats, salad, cheese, and red wine, all served by our chauffeurs, who had brought the luncheon-hampers with us from Doullens.

I experienced a little thrill as we descended into the *boyau* leading into the Spahi position in the afternoon. Two British "Tommies" were coming out of the trenches just as we were going in. They had placed a new big gun in the woods near by, where it would cross the French fire and enfilade the Germans. They were very proud of it. They were waiting for orders from the general commanding to try it on the "Boches" in the morning. The French and British lines come together just north of this

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

point, with their heavy artillery concentrated on the enemy; the firing of the guns crosses like the laces of a boot. This new British field-piece was commanded by a brother of George Mair, who was with us. He and the two artillerymen exchanged commonplaces exactly as though they had met in Piccadilly or Pall Mall. The war was theirs, and they might be as casual as they chose about it; but to me the encounter awakened a deeper emotion because it was the first time I had heard English spoken as the native tongue of any of the men at the front.

The Spahi camp was very interesting. When I saw them I thought of Shreyer's "Powder Play," and of other pictures exploiting the wonderful horsemanship of one of the finest cavalry arms in the French service. The famous African cavalry is now dismounted, and is used principally for night attacks. The dash and courage of the men and their weird cries in the charge have made them of the greatest value in this phase of modern trench warfare. When they are not busy taking positions at the point of the bayonet, they live in caves on the hillside, like their own Tunisian troglodytes. At the crest of the ridge above their intrenchments are

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

the slender poles of the field telephone and meshes of barbed wire. The Spahis are continually under the crackle of the shells from the German position in one direction and the French batteries in the other. In a cave deeper than the ones they have dug for themselves they have made a refuge for the pet of the regiment, a fox-terrier dog. She has three puppies born under fire, and is bringing them up as unconcerned as she would in a peaceful kennel many miles back of the front. One of the men dived into the cave and brought out the puppies to let me take their photograph; but the mother was self-conscious. She took their heads in her mouth one by one, and carried them back into the dugout.

There is a wonderful view from the edge of the south *éperon* of Notre Dame de Lorette; a panorama of undulating fields, of valleys, wooded slopes, bifurcating roadways, and half-burned villages stretches out at one's feet. Below, a little to the left, is Ablain St. Nazaire. There were dense smoke clouds hanging over the town, with the occasional white puffs of exploding shrapnel. Another bitter fight was going on for possession of the famous pump that provides the only fresh water in



A famous
Sketch map of the Artois sector fr



le-ground
he Notre Dame de Lorette hillside

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

the neighborhood. It was hard to believe that the irregular white mass of stone above the trees was all that was left of the former small cathedral. Smoke rose from the ruined houses, and the deafening detonations of the guns from the valley echoed through the ravine at our side. We could see little mites of men walking along the broken road from the burning village beyond to the foot of the hill at our feet. These were the *brancardiers*, or Red-Cross men, carrying the wounded back on their little two-wheeled carts to the field hospital hidden behind the hill.

Farther away, at the end of a white road, was Souchez, basking in the sunlight. There was a lull in the firing there; the main attack for the afternoon was directed at Ablain, and Souchez and its famous sugar mill were for the time being given a respite. On a line between Ablain and Souchez, but so far away that we could not locate it through the dust and smoke of the shells, was the *Labyrinthe*, the terrible maze of mines and counter-mines, of trenches, bomb-proofs, and redoubts lying flat on the plain. In the middle distance, beyond the clumps of trees that mark the winding of the river, was Carency; beyond it lay Neuville St. Vaast, now

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

little more than a tomb of a village. Far off to the right was Aubigny, as yet not badly damaged. Nearer, partly hidden by a ridge, was Mont-St.-Eloi. Holding its place, as it properly should, in the center between Neuville and Mont-St.-Eloi, was La Targette; beyond it, though it could not be seen because of the haze, was the great objective in the German scheme of strategy, Arras.

It was typical of the campaign in this sector that there was no general engagement. The volleys of the guns for the time being were concentrated on Ablain, except for some desultory cannonading over the *Labyrinthe*. By evening the scene might shift to Neuville St. Vaast, in the morning change to the hand-to-hand combats about the sugar mill at Souchez, and at night there might be another shift to a bayonet attack on our own hillside of Notre Dame de Lorette.

We began the descent down the hill very carefully. The sun was oppressively hot. It was a steep and tortuous path through the communicating trenches to a point at the bottom where two roads meet. One, which is partly sunken at its nearest point, winds down over the slope ahead, the other leads to Ablain St. Nazaire on the left. There

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

was a large bomb-proof cave just above the foot of the hill. In its depths the air was much cooler than on the plains outside, and its wide opening afforded a splendid view. We went inside to wait until the others should return from Ablain St. Nazaire. I was awakened out of a doze by Captain X——. Waves of heat radiated from the corrugated roof of a dugout beyond. Through them the landscape swayed like a painted canvas panorama in a theater. The captain called my attention to a clump of trees standing out against the skyline on the right. Emerging slowly from it was one of our cars, the big Renault. When it reached the open the chauffeur slammed his foot on the accelerator, and with wide-open exhaust the car came ahead over the road on the ridge like a racer in the Grand Prix. It reached a point almost opposite us when it swerved to the left and came down the partly sunken road that ended at our feet, with a cloud of dust in its wake.

The captain remarked that he knew of no surer way of drawing the German fire. At the same moment the first shot, an explosive bomb, caved in the roadway directly behind the car and only a hundred yards in front of our position. The big Re-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

nault made another turn when it reached the foot of the hill, and pulled up in a safe position behind the field-hospital. The German shell had gone wide of the mark, but to show their complete control of the road (I can imagine no other reason for using up ammunition), they placed a second shot at the corner where the car had turned, and a third in the copse where it had been hidden. They came back with another directed at the road in front of us, another at the turn, and another in the copse. The fourth shell in front of us ricocheted. The impact slowed it up, and with the naked eye we could see it land in a field, rise a second time, and explode as it smashed a tree to pieces in the distance. "One, two, three; one, two, three!" from the road to the copse and back again, the shells announcing their approach with the same sound of an onrushing train to which by now we were becoming accustomed; a mass of crimson flame where they landed, a column of dense black or yellow smoke, then the roar of the detonation reached us. It was a weird sensation to stand, as it were, on the side-lines, so close to the bombardment, yet in comparative safety, and watch this fearsome demonstration of the power of modern artillery.



A modern battlefield

Site of the chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette, seen from the captured German trenches,
July 8, 1915

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

A little Red-Cross cart passed in front of us with a wounded man. It came back empty from the field hospital. The *brancardiers* were going back to Ablain after more wounded. In the meantime one of the attendants had received first aid himself. His head was swathed in a bandage, and he could see out of only one eye. But he paid no attention to his injury; he stopped while I took his photograph. He asked me to send a proof to him, and then he trotted back toward the burning village to help his comrades. This is the spirit that wins your eternal admiration everywhere along the French front. It is the same spirit that inspired an unknown hero to shout from the riddled trenches where he lay with a handful of fatally wounded comrades, "*Debout! les morts.*" ("Stand up! dead ones!") And the dead ones—there was not a living *poilu* in the lot who was not maimed or crippled—lifted themselves and fired a final volley. It served. The onrushing Germans were checked, and in that moment of hesitation the supporting mitrailleuses rattled into action. The trenches were held, while the "dead ones" lay heaped among the sand-bags.

Our staff captain told it at dinner one night as an

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

old story. I hope I may be forgiven for repeating it here.

The shadows were lengthening when a German prisoner was brought in. I expected to find a giant of the Prussian Guard. The Prussian Guard are the bogie-men, they have a remarkable capacity for being everywhere at once. Instead, we saw a pitiful wreck of a nineteen-year-old lad, trembling like an aspen, burned holes in his gray uniform where the bullets had gone through, a racking tubercular cough, and a wan face covered with dust. He had been lost in the trenches for two days without food or water. He had watched through the hell of shells and bombs and colored flares in the darkness with only the dead of his company about him. At dawn of the second morning he tried to find his way back to the German lines, and stumbled into the French trenches instead. His captor was a stocky little Frenchman from the Midi. He had given his own bottle of wine and loaf of bread to the prisoner. The *poilus* gathered about the young German, and asked for buttons as souvenirs. He begged them to take the sleeve buttons and those on his shoulders, but not the ones on the front of his tunic. He unbuttoned it, and showed only a



Waiting to run the gauntlet across the zone of German fire on the Bouvigny plateau. Watch in hand the dragon dispatched the cars at five minute intervals like the starter of the Vanderbilt Cup Race

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

tattered rag in place of an undershirt. The officers took the number of his regiment by using the sign language. The French soldiers were very kind to him, and he was evidently glad to be captured. As they led him away, I tried to believe that this timid youngster was of the same race that had destroyed Arras, Soissons, and Rheims, but I couldn't.

Our big Renault was trapped. The road over which it had come ended at the field hospital behind the foot of the slope, the parallel road on the left led into the thick of the action now taking place about Ablain St. Nazaire. The officers decided not to risk running back across the zone of fire while it was yet light. None of us mentioned it, but I am sure that all of us rejoiced in our hearts that the officers considered it foolhardy. The chauffeurs were ordered not to attempt the return over the shell-swept road to join the others until after dusk. We left them, and made our way through by-paths, trenches, and behind hills back to the rendezvous where the other cars were waiting. It was a round-about way, and fearfully tiring to those of us who were not in training for a Marathon. We passed along sunken roads, and then through a forest at the edge of which a squad of artillerymen de-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

bouched their horses into the plain for exercise. We stumbled over the boulders in the bed of a brook, and came up on the opposite bank abruptly into the battery of "75's" that had been firing over our heads all the afternoon. It was twilight, and the men were at supper. The smoke of the cook-stoves wound in willowy spirals out of the glade where they were hidden. The cheerful clatter of spoons and plates and a very appetizing aroma reached us from their mess-table, concealed beneath a bower of leafy branches.

The final stretch of our long promenade carried us through a *boyau* that crossed a number of fields midway between the nearest French and German artillery positions, though in the hush of the evening there was no noise more awesome than the sound of our voices and the chatter of birds in the hedges. When we came out of the *boyau*, close to the wooded clump of trees where we were to rendezvous, the big Renault was just rolling up. The chauffeurs had anticipated their orders a bit, for it was not yet quite dark. The enemy's gunners, evidently convinced that they had bottled the car up, were at supper. Before they had recovered from their astonishment over its sudden appearance, the

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

car had rounded the bend and was dashing down the straight road in the opposite direction.

The head chauffeur had all the audacity and spirit of a hero of romance. He had been ordered to wait until dusk, but that was an indefinite time. He chafed at being caught in a trap, he said. He cranked up, and picked his way cautiously back over the broken highway. It was strewn with heaps of dirt, and five shot-holes in the center forced him each time to descend into the ditch and climb out again. The Germans had been caught napping and had only a moment in which to fire an ineffective shell in its wake before the car was out of sight and range behind the trees at the crest of the slope. The last shell started something and a brisk engagement between the French and German batteries followed.

In whatever opportunities we had to observe them and in the trying positions in which we occasionally found ourselves, the gallantry of the French army chauffeurs was splendid. They were always cool, always ready to carry new adventures through with admirable courage and *élan*. This brilliant dash across the road raked by the enemy's fire in a modern steel-gray motor car is reminiscent somehow

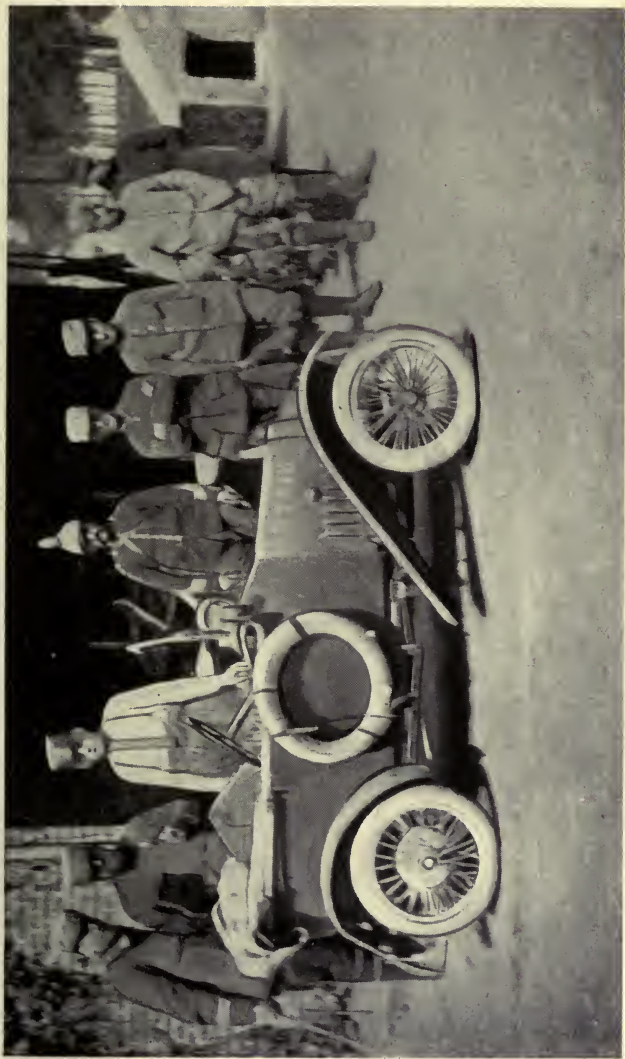
BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

of the spirit of Balaklava or of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg.

We were back in the line of secondary defense at Jouy St. Servins, where we stopped for coffee. It was a quaint little town, with an old church steeple behind the duck-pond and watering-trough; a peaceful, bucolic background for the movement of batteries, the chugging motors, the marching of armed men, and the neighing of cavalry horses galloping up to the trough at the water-call.

The dining-room and kitchen of the little *auberge* were one, a wide open fireplace reaching to the ceiling, and a chicken turning on a spit over the embers of a wood fire. The wainscoting on the walls was dingy, and smoke begrimed the beams overhead. About the tables were soldiers in gray coats, in blue coats, or no coats at all. They were playing games or scratching laboriously at letters and post-cards. A lumbering Porthos slammed his cards on the table; a maid in a blue smock was serving bottles of wine. It might have been a page out of "The Three Musketeers."

We finished our coffee and went out into the gloom. The head-lights of the cars were blinking at us with owl-like eyes. Through the narrow



The modern dispatch bearer, the "Baby Peugeot" that takes the place of the old time orderly on his dashing steed

ONE DAY (JULY 8) IN THE ARTOIS SECTOR

street came the *clump, clump* of hobnailed boots on the cobbles. The soldiers swung into the village green and company after company passed on. They were humming "Sambre et Meuse," and the rhythmic beat of the music followed them into the night.

*"Le Regiment de Sambre-et-Meuse
Marchait toujours au cri de liberté
Cherchant la route glorieuse
Qui le conduit a l'immortalité."*

A regiment of infantry was going up to the front. We were going away from it.

CHAPTER X

AFTERWARD

MOTORING IN THE PATH OF WAR

A SHELL-SWEPT ribbon of "No Man's Land" begins just south of a gap in the Vosges between Belfort and Aldkirch—near the point where the boundaries of Switzerland, France and Germany meet. It zigzags its way upward—a region of deafening thunder and unearthly silences—along the slopes and valleys of the mountains to Ste. Marie aux Mines. On either side of it are ridges of fresh-turned earth. At varying distances back of the ridges—in copses, gullies and sheltered positions—are gray-nosed guns partially concealed by overhanging branches or beneath embankments of earth and dead leaves.

This line is in German territory—in Alsace. Leaving the valley of the Ill, it climbs up into what was once a region of fir-clad slopes, deep ravines, glinting rivers and sleepy little mountain towns, each with its white church tower rising above the

AFTERWARD

slate-colored roofs. East of St. Dié the line swings northwest, crosses the frontier into France, and then carries on beyond Lunéville and Nancy to Pont-à-Mousson. Up to this point, although still in France, it is close to the German boundary. From Pont-à-Mousson it forms a wedge, running southwest to St. Mihiel on the River Meuse and promptly doubling back again before it sweeps around Verdun in a long curve. Straightened out, it again crosses the Meuse, cuts through the Forest of Argonne, crosses the upper waters of the Aisne and runs almost due west to the country of chalky ridges and wide undulating horizons that is known as the Champagne district.

At Auberive, near Rheims, it bends north and sweeps about the old cathedral town to Berry-aubac on the Aisne. Then it continues westward between the river and the Craonne plateau to the town of Ribécourt, above Compiègne. From this point to the Channel, running almost due north, it passes Roye and sweeps over the plateau between the Somme and the Scarpe. To Arras it leads and then to Givenchy, Armentières, Ypres and Dixmude. Near Nieuport, in Belgium, it sinks into the sea.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

This, as the gentle reader by now has divined, is the line between the two "fronts"—the Central Powers on one hand and the armies of France, Great Britain and Belgium on the other. It is a land where no man may live, a land swept day and night by heavy shells, searched by rifle fire, hand grenades or contact bombs and torn up from beneath by subterranean mines. It is a region desolate of trees, of vegetation. Though it runs through what once were forests and fields, there is nothing in the grizzly landscape to faintly suggest forests and fields except for occasional tree stumps hacked off close to the ground. Though it runs through villages, the villages have been swept away—the houses are mere shells—broken walls, heaps of dusty powdered stone and chimneys rising unsteadily out of the ruins. Though it skirts wooded slopes, their outlines are serrated as though by some titanic mining operation. Though it crosses winding rivers the stone-arched bridges that span them have been destroyed. It needs only the presence of the solitary boatman to ferry one across their blackened waters—the shell-torn banks on either side might easily be that desolate land of empty spaces across the Styx.



First line French trenches advanced position 11.40 A. M.
July 8, Notre Dame de Lorette

AFTERWARD

Vineyards and old *manoirs* have been beaten down beneath a hailstorm of metal. In place of tilled gardens are furrows plowed by shells, in place of long green meadows are uneven surfaces—craters, shell pits, sharpened stakes and broken rock. At times the earth disgorges boot legs, knapsacks, spiked helmets, rusty rifles or discolored underwear. It is a region where nature has been crushed, a modern visualization of Dante's *Inferno*.

Since the lines have been set in more or less fixed positions, practically all of the infantry assaults and attacks "à la bayonette" occur at night. They usually follow an artillery "curtain of fire" that cleans out the trenches as far as possible before the order to advance is given by telephone or colored flares. An uncanny lull follows the night attacks. As daylight comes, long rows of gray- or blue-clad bodies are disclosed stretched out in this "No Man's Land" between the ridges of earth and sand bank parapets on either side. The bodies lie rotting in the sun since neither army will grant an armistice to give them burial.

This long ribbon of desolation varies in width in its innumerable zigzags from the Vosges to the Channel. In some places in the mountains, notably

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

in the terrific battleground about the summit of Hartmannsweiler-Kopf the lines are a few yards apart. In others through the Woëvre and the Aisne some hundreds of yards separate them. They practically meet, as I have described, in the suburb of Blangy near Arras, where the strip is no wider than a city street. They again open out into a fairly broad expanse as they run north of Givenchy and into the low country defended by the British and Belgians near the Channel.

The line is supposed to be some three hundred and fifty miles in length, but with its various curves and salients it must be at least one hundred and fifty miles longer. Since I visited the western area in June and July of 1915 the line has been straightened out through the great offensive in the Battle of Champagne and again in the Franco-British assault near Souchez and up the valley in the region about Loos to La Bassée. The complete devastation along this ragged scar between the lines would be distressing enough if it went no further. But the havoc wrought by shells and mines extends far beyond the confines of the trenches, back into the depots for reserves and munitions and back into former peaceful little villages

AFTERWARD

lying miles behind the front. Enveloped in this iron band of destruction are some of the most beautiful historic monuments in northern France. With what has happened to France within her own embattled territory we are all familiar. Of what has happened to that other France now held by the German invaders little has been said. We have read nothing of it even in the stories of the pro-German correspondents who have been allowed to comb it through and through by the Prussian general staff. I have wondered, as I looked across the sweeping landscape in the direction of Laon and Lille, or St. Mihiel, Noyon or Douai, if these towns were being allowed to carry on their numerous activities in spite of the great gray host that now occupies them. I have wondered to what extent they have been damaged by the shell fire of the French guns. For the French may not discriminate. Where the towns back of the front are comparatively safe, they must batter away at their own villages close to the lines so long as these villages contain earthworks, temporary redoubts or enemy troops in force. One is safe in presuming that the ruin wrought by the German shells on one side is duplicated by the French shells on the other. That

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

the French have spared the hospitals, churches and historic monuments goes without saying. Had the Germans done as much the widespread feeling of antagonism and hatred in other civilized countries would not exist.

This devastated district from the Vosges to the Channel was at one time one of the most attractive motoring countries in Europe. Except in the northern sections, in parts of Artois and Picardy and all of Belgium, where *pavé* prevailed, the roads were splendid. They were either the famous *routes nationales* planned by Napoleon or the smaller *chemins de communications*, which are sometimes better since their surfaces are less exposed to heavy motor travel. Beginning with the hilly slopes of the Vosges, one could follow this ribbon through a widely diversified landscape, with all the distinctive features that mark the lovely countryside of France. It was a prosperous region. The towns were either busy manufacturing centers or staid old world villages depending upon the trade in grain and wheat or the product of the surrounding vineyards to give them commercial independence. The inns should always be taken into consideration in planning a motor tour. In this part of northern



Over 1000 men are buried here and their bodies exhumed as the shells explode

AFTERWARD

France they were generally clean and well ordered.

The contemplation of this fair region adjoining the strip between the lines—shot over for eighteen months or more by the heaviest artillery known to modern science and haunted by the ghosts of tens of thousands of dead soldiers—is sufficiently dispiriting from a distance. No one would apparently care to make a closer acquaintance with it. Yet this will be, when the great war is over, the most popular touring ground in the world.

The reasons therefor offer interesting study to psychologists. Once, when I was a boy in Chicago, I remember passing the county jail after a hanging. The thing that had happened within its gray walls was sufficiently awesome and I walked faster, hoping to leave the thought of it behind me. I was overtaken by a black undertaker's wagon jolting its lifeless passenger over the uneven pavement. A great crowd of men and boys—and a few women—followed in its wake. This crowd was referred to contemptuously in the papers the next day as the "morbidly curious." The "morbidly curious" will have enormous opportunity after the war is over to whet their ghoulish appetites. They

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

will tramp through these miles of catacombs and revel in the grim recollection that under their feet lie the bones of thousands of gallant soldiers, that in the neighboring villages women were violated and old men and children murdered by a relentless enemy. On a West Indian tour I made a few years ago, some of the ship's passengers returned from a visit to the ruins of St. Pierre, Martinique, each with a tooth as a souvenir. Treasure seekers of this sort will find a rich field for their labors in the devastated towns and abandoned trenches along the front.

I am, however, an optimist at heart. I would have lost faith in human nature were I not sure that the vast majority of tourists who visit the war zone will be impelled by higher motives. The spirit of the men who fought on both sides in the Civil War—at Chancellorsville, Antietam and in the Wilderness—is still with us, if quiescent. We who can still be thrilled at the remembrance of their exploits are stirred at the thought of the gallant British army that retreated from Mons before an overwhelming force without losing its *morale* and was ready to turn at the Marne and give battle. Our sympathies and affections are with the citi-

AFTERWARD

zen soldiery of the sister republic that once came to our aid when we needed help. The patriotism and love of country that inspire the men now fighting at Givenchy, Arras, the Main de Massiges, in the Woëvre and about the peak of Hartmannsweiler-Kopf is the same spirit that inspired the embattled farmers at Concord Bridge and Washington's army at Trenton. Patriotic Americans have consecrated the battlefield of Gettysburg, the scenes of Pickett's charge and the heroic sacrifice of the First Minnesota regiment are hallowed ground. Patriotic Americans will be animated by a loftier feeling than idle curiosity in following on the spot the charge of the Black Watch at Ypres and the advances and assaults of the French line regiments from the Artois sector to the German frontier.

Pompeii, Paestum, Herculaneum and the various Roman relics in southern France have been the Mecca for tourists for centuries. For many years to come they will be overshadowed in public interest by the more recent ruins of Rheims and Soissons, Arras, Ypres and Dixmude. If stone shafts and monuments identify the positions of different regiments and the various phases of the struggle at Gettysburg we can expect to find col-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

umns and monoliths marking the action on the many battlefields of the Marne. It will be here that Von Kluck's right flank was turned, here that the mysterious taxicab army from Paris was first sighted by scouting *aviatiks* and the advancing Uhlan patrols, here that the armies of the Duke of Württemberg and the Crown Prince retreated following the news of Foch's successful thrust at the German center. The positions that have become famous in the trench fighting will need no commemorative inscriptions. Hartmannsweiler-Kopf, Pont-à-Mousson, Thiaucourt, St. Mihiel, Butte de Mesnil, Souain, Perthes, Béthany, Berry-au-Bac, Ribécourt, Lassigny, Roye, Arras, Blangy, the *Labyrinthe*, La Bassée, Armentières and Neuve Chappelle tell their own story.

Italy has capitalized her ancient ruins. It will not be surprising if the towns of northern France capitalize their misfortunes. There will be little else left to capitalize. It will take a long time to rebuild and re-establish industries. In some places to rebuild or re-establish industries is entirely out of the question. The towns will simply continue to exist through the ages as ruins. Some of them will not even be respectable ruins. I have received a



Fox terrier and her puppies born under the fire of French
and German guns in the Spahi position

AFTERWARD

letter from a staff officer with whom I had been in Arras. He had just returned from a later visit and tells me that even the jagged tooth of the tower of the Hotel de Ville that rose above the crumpled arches has been shot away since I was there and that nothing remains of the walls above the ground floor.

There is nothing more interesting than a picturesque ruin, but the Germans are overdoing it. Devoid of outline, a mere shell holding ugly mounds of powdered stone and débris, a ruin loses its sentimental appeal. It is not only a body from which the soul has fled but a body without suggestion of its former beauty. Unless the Germans begin soon to save their ammunition there will be many such soulless heaps of broken stone behind the lines where the rival armies are interlocked. So far they have spared Rheims cathedral—to an extent. That is to say, the job is not as complete as it might be, or can still be if the German military chiefs cease using their 155-millimeter guns and commence a bombardment from the distant heights with the heavy mortars that leveled Namur and Liège. But Soissons and Arras, Louvain and Malines, Ypres and Dixmude are completely satisfying. They will

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

stand for all time as the most extraordinary examples of wilful devastation and sacrilege that the world has ever known. Let your American motorist see them. Let him stand in their ruins and wonder, as we who have seen them have wondered, wherein they symbolize twenty centuries of civilization and progress.

To one who loves France it is a disheartening task to outline a motor tour through the devastated district that I have tried to describe in the foregoing pages. It would be completely discouraging if, following the birth of a new France at the Marne, I were not convinced that many of her towns and villages would lift themselves out of their ashes once the menace of Prussian militarism was forever removed.

Such a tour should begin at the eastern end in the Vosges. This upon the supposition that the motorist, like the playwright, believes in working gradually into a story and saving his great dramatic effects for the climax. Commencing, then, at Belfort, where is situate the southernmost of France's great quartette of frontier fortresses, *route nationale* No. 83 carries one due east between the Jura Mountains and the Vosges. It crosses

AFTERWARD

the frontier into Alsace. It is encouraging to think that if the Allies win there will no longer be a frontier into Alsace. The extreme right wing of the French lines is encountered just below Dannemarie, near Aldkirch. From here the trenches run due north, east of Thann and west of Guebwiller into the fastnesses of the Vosges—Hartmannsweiler-Kopf, Ballon de Guebwiller, Metzeral, Münster and the Col de Ste. Marie. Before the war there were no highways paralleling this line but there were many small roads that crossed and recrossed it. There was a fair country road running close to the front from Cernay east of the peak of Hartmannsweiler-Kopf—2,800 feet above the sea—to Guebwiller and from there up the valley of the Lauch to Lautenbach. This was a most attractive mountain country of vast expanses, sloping ranges and verdant forests. A little beyond Lautenbach a mountain road skirts the ridges on the eastern slope close to the present trenches up to the Fecht river, where a turn to the left carries one back up the valley and into the fighting zone about Münster. A road leads further up the valley from Münster and crosses the main chain of mountains by the Col de la Schlucht. But

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

by turning to the right a byway of many hairpin corners and sudden dips carries one to Orbey, directly in the lines. Beyond, at La Pontroye, there is a choice of two narrow and tortuous mountain roads encircling the lofty peak of Le Bressoir, which reaches an altitude of 4,030 feet. One winds about the western slopes running in and out close to the present trenches until it joins the main road over the Col du Ste. Marie des Mines. This is the better road, since it is in close proximity to the battleground. The other is much longer and is less interesting. Beyond the summit of the Col du Ste. Marie des Mines, which is 2,500 feet above the sea, the "No Man's Land" between the lines crosses the ridges of the Vosges and swings back into France and the valley of the Meurthe in Lorraine.

In sketching this part of the route, I have fallen back on an old acquaintance with the beautiful Vosges district. I motored one summer throughout the country in the neighborhood of the cures of Contrexéville and Vittel and attacked the mountain passes by automobile on different occasions from Belfort, Le Thillot, Remiremont and Epinal. It is a wild and beautiful region and, as usual, the



A New York chauffeur in a block house near Ablain St.
Nazaire—July 8

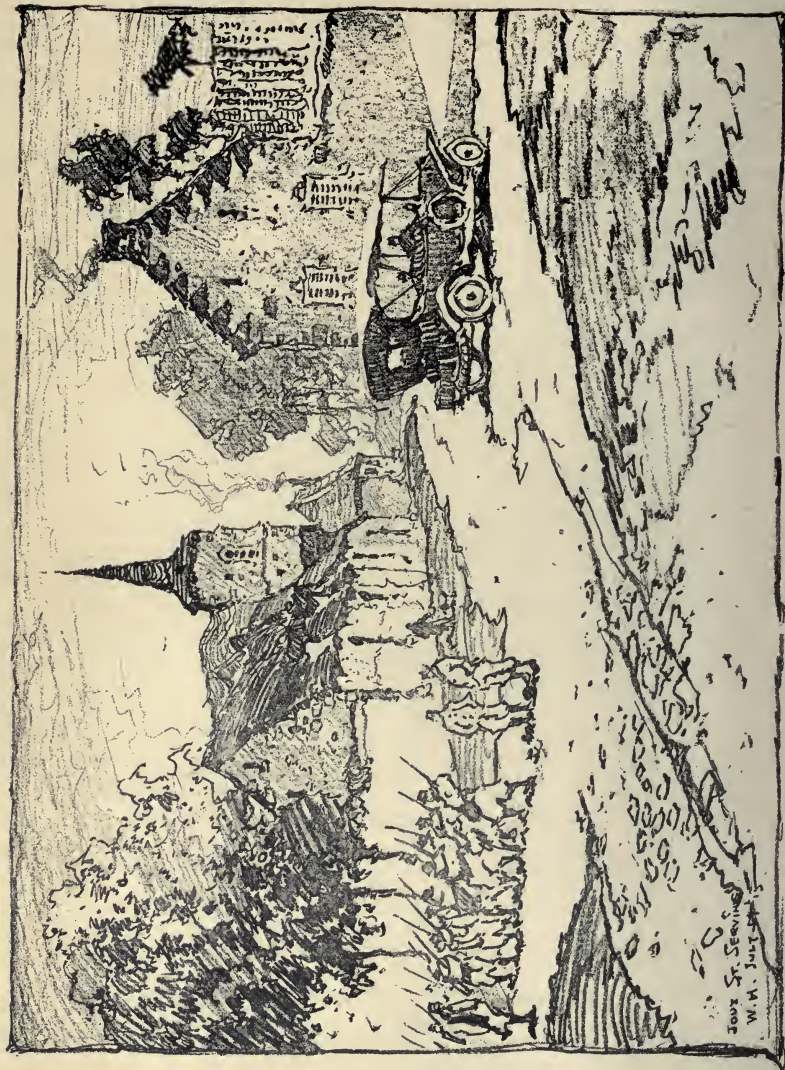
AFTERWARD

roads in the mountains are generally better than those in the plains. I know nothing of new conditions in this district from actual experience. I can only imagine to what extent the towns and villages and the surrounding country have been devastated. French officers in Paris tell me that the old roads have been kept in good repair for the transportation by motor of troops and supplies and that many new ones have been constructed to isolated points in the lines—particularly from the German side. There were excellent hotels throughout the country before the war and while German was the official language of German Alsace, French was spoken everywhere.

Leaving the Vosges, one leaves the only part of the long battle front where the war has been brought home to Germany. From now on it is all in France and Belgium. Leaving the rugged and hilly mountainous country, highways are more frequent and all parts of the present lines are easily accessible. Driving northwest on the slopes above the Meurthe, Sennones, a picturesque old French town with a château and ancient abbey converted into spinning mills, lies within that part of France that is now held by the enemy. I know not its

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

fate, but it is so close to the lines that it is probably completely destroyed. It is not unlike reading obituary notices to turn, as I am doing at times as I write this, to the little automobile guide book that has befriended me on my tours in the past. Of Sennones, it says, to translate its signs and laconic abbreviations, "Inhabitants 4719—Distance from Paris 377 kilometers. Sights—Hôtel de Ville; 19th Century Church with Tombs; on the north, the Valley of Rabodeau. Hotel Barthélemy, stable for three automobiles. Mechanics—Froly; Colin (cycles)." God made the country and man the town. But since the war began man has been so busy unmaking the towns along the line that I have no doubt the only thing unchanged about Sennones is the distance from Paris. From what I have seen elsewhere, I can picture the calcined bones of the Hotel de Ville showing above masses of débris in the Grande Rue and the church steeple crushed down to the level of its ruined tombs. Beyond question the stable of the Hotel Barthélemy no longer affords shelter for three automobiles. When we come to the mechanics Froly and Colin the human element appears. Their names stare at me out of the printed page. I seem to



Jouy St. Servins

AFTERWARD

know them. They appeal to me pathetically like the names of friends I ought not to have forgotten. I pray that a relentless enemy has dealt lightly with the mechanics Froly and Colin.

The fate of Sennones can easily be imagined if Gerbéviller, a small town of Lorraine some distance further away from the front on the French side, has been laid waste. This was a quaint old place in a picturesque environment in the valley of the Meurthe. It was a village of moss-covered house tops and narrow winding streets, dominated from a height above by the ancient château and chapel of Lambertye. The Germans worked here with a vim. In three days following the first invasion with the help of explosive bombs and torches they brought all the house tops crumpling down upon those of the inhabitants who were unable to escape.

Leaving Sennones, which is easily reached by motor from Nancy, the lines run close to the German frontier along the river Seille. At one point they are distant not more than eight miles as the crow flies from the one time capital of Lorraine. Nomeny, an ancient French town now in the hands of the Germans, is passed some distance away on

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

the right and then the ribbon of battle front loops itself about Pont-à-Mousson, in the Moselle valley. In other days this was a popular automobile excursion from Nancy. It is now a beleaguered old world citadel rising out of the meadows that skirt the river. It has been continually shot at and shelled. The walls of its arcaded *place* are pitted with holes. Many of the inhabitants have clung to this storm-beaten area as they have to Soissons and Arras. It is in the neighborhood of some of the heaviest fighting of the present war as it was in the wars in the days of the Romans. An important base hospital is situated here from which the wounded are sent in motor ambulances to the nearest railway station to be distributed by train to the hospitals of Paris or the south of France.

Pont-à-Mousson has been the headquarters of the American Ambulance at Neuilly, although the work of the Ambulance has not been confined to any particular locality. Because of the nature of the country and the severity of the fighting, the Section stationed here has been called upon not only to live in barracks constantly menaced by the German artillery, but to render service in carrying off their wounded "couchés" and "assis"—as the

AFTERWARD

two classes of patients are called—under circumstances demanding the utmost gallantry and valor. The letters of one of these young American ambulance drivers have been published in book form for private distribution. There is a pathetic note in one of them that will bear repetition. He is given a case, *tres pressé*, he is told. The case is a young soldier not more than nineteen years of age. He had been wounded in the chest and part of his side was gone. He raised his tired eyes and smiled bravely as he was being lifted into the car. But although the young American picked his way never so carefully down the long hill he found when he had reached the hospital that he had been driving a hearse instead of an ambulance.

The strip of "No Man's Land" narrows after leaving the vicinity of Pont-à-Mousson before entering a desolate landscape—the gruesome wilderness of blackened tree trunks, mine craters and serrated slopes that was once the famous Bois le Prêtre. Rocking to and fro the rival armies have fought over this mutilated strip of woodland. It is not more than five miles across, but the French in their effort to hold their advantageous positions in the Quart en Reserve and the Croix des Carmes

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

have lost some 40,000 men. The "Boches," who held the lines for a long time before they were driven out, aptly called it *Wittenwalden*—the Widow's Wood.

Some distance behind the lines I have been following lie two more of France's frontier fortresses—Epinal and Toul. Between Toul and the battle front is the beautiful city of Nancy. A fair city of wide squares, of boulevards lined with clipped trees, of ancient stone-arched gates, of palaces and parks and monuments. Small wonder that the Kaiser, in his white uniform and golden helmet, waited with his bodyguard on a distant hill to the north until word came that the city had fallen that he might enter it to the blare of trumpets and the triumphal cheers of his marching soldiers. The Kaiser might still be waiting on the distant hill, for Nancy has not fallen. Nancy has not even been seriously threatened, except by long-range bombardments that have inflicted no material damage except for the killing of women and non-combatant civilians.

Southwest of Nancy, well protected behind the powerful fortress of Toul, is Domremy, the birthplace of Joan of Arc. The little hamlet with its

AFTERWARD

old church and the hill whereon the maid heard the mysterious voices is at least forty-five kilometers from the nearest front-line positions. This is of interest in view of the cabled stories that have pictured the *poilus* fighting desperately to beat the invader back from the trenches surrounding the cottage where Joan first saw the light. It is a quaint story. That the spirit of Joan of Arc is again inspiring the soldiers of France is no doubt true, but that the Germans will ever be any nearer to her birthplace than they are at this writing is most unlikely.

To return to the battle line. After leaving the ghastly cairns of the Bois de Prêtre it crosses the Thiaucourt Road. Possession of the Thiaucourt Road was vitally important in the strategy of the opposing field generals in this sector. For months it was fought over through a storm of shells from the German "77's," "220's" and "320's" and the answering fire of the "75's" and "155's" of the French artillery. The name was constantly mentioned in the *communiqués* during the early days of the war. The road leads out of a splendid highway—*route nationale* No. 58—which ran from Pont-à-Mousson to St. Mihiel. The *route nationale* so closely parallels the present trenches that in some places it is

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

only a few yards distant from them. On one stretch, from Bouconville to Apremont, the highway actually forms the contested strip between the lines with the opposing forces separated only by its width from ditch to ditch. A dash through this zone in a racing car at the present time would be a most inspiring performance, but I fear it will be a long time after hostilities cease before this section of *route nationale* No. 58 will be of service to automobilists. It leaves the trenches at Apremont and meets another main thoroughfare in the valley of the Meuse. From this point a swing to the right carries one up to St. Mihiel, an important town held by the left wing of the Crown Prince's army at the Battle of the Marne.

The Germans have never allowed St. Mihiel to slip from their grasp. The V-shaped wedge they have pushed down into the valley of the Meuse with St. Mihiel at its apex is a constant thorn in the side of the French General Staff. It is an extraordinary strategical position. The toe of the flatiron is on a direct line drawn between the two great forts of Toul and Verdun. The topography of the country lends itself to defense. In spite of the fact that the German position is apparently

AFTERWARD

exposed to attack from either flank, it has been so well protected by fortifications and heavy batteries that it has been so far impregnable against repeated assaults by the French artillery and infantry.

As the lines forming this wedge double back they run north through what was once an attractive landscape of glades and wooded copses to the little village of Harville. Here the French positions show a recent perceptible gain—the old lines ran to the west through Fresnes. At Harville the motorist will drive across *route nationale* No. 3, it runs from Verdun east to Metz across the plain of the Woëvre through some of the greatest battlefields of the Franco-Prussian war. Rezonville, the scene of the famous charge, Gravelotte and Thionville are all in this district and Sedan is not far away to the northwest beyond Verdun.

I recollect motoring over the battlefield of Gravelotte, through which this highway cuts, some five years ago en route from Carlsbad to Havre. We crossed it towards sunset, when the stone shafts dotting the field were bathed in a glow of orange. There were wreaths at the base of some of the shafts, and cyclists were lazily pedaling out of the

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

west, their figures silhouetted against the light. In the peaceful lull of the evening there was no sound and the thought that war would ever again sweep over this wide expanse of undulating plain seemed quite incomprehensible. The Woëvre district, as in 1870, is again combed through and through by an invading gray host of Teutons. But there are no cavalry charges, no enveloping movements by infantry and no galloping artillery coming up in support. The Woëvre district knows now only the modern scientific method of warfare.

North of Harville the lines meet another highway and later cross *route nationale* No. 18 between Etain and Verdun. We are still on the great wide plain of the Woëvre which sweeps away on either side in interminable distances. On clear days Metz, the lost city of Lorraine, with the white spires of its great cathedral shining in the sunlight, may be seen through the telescope from the forts at Verdun. A network of roads connects all the towns and villages on the plateau and leads to all the points of interest on this part of the front. The upkeep of these roads within the French lines is left to the Territorials, who sweep them clear of rock and débris and fill up the shell holes to facili-



The ruined church at Ribécourt

AFTERWARD

tate the movement of motor ambulances and supply trains.

Swinging west into the Meuse Valley, our ribbon of devastation circles about Verdun. Verdun is the stoutest of the frontier fortresses and the one most exposed in the present war. It has withstood bombardment after bombardment from every available vantage point. I remember with what despair the report circulated in Paris that Verdun had fallen. But the forts of Verdun, still nearest to the battle lines, continue to hold out. From their bomb-proof chambers melinite shells are launched at the enemy and their big guns continue to hold the armies of the Crown Prince at a respectful distance.

I have only a hazy memory of Verdun in peace times. We stopped for dinner at the Hotel des Trois Maures, a sleepy little inn. The streets of the town were also slumbering and from the bridge across the river somnolent fishermen were watching the oily surface of the water below. Its modern forts, with their grass-covered parapets, looked no more formidable from a distance than bunkers on a golf course.

Crossing the Meuse near Consonvoye, the

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

trenches, still keeping close together, run through the Bois de Malancourt up to the battered town of Varennes, where they enter the famous Forest of Argonne. South of this point, above the valley of the Aire, is Clermont-en-Argonne. Here we are back again on *route nationale* No. 3 which we crossed coming north from St. Mihiel in the Woëvre. It is the main highway from Paris to Metz and southern Germany.

At the beginning of the war Clermont was ravaged by the Fourth Reserve Corps of the Fifth German Army under command of the Crown Prince. It was a small town of no military importance, even though it was situated on a hill and afforded, as my motoring guide book says, a *beau panorama*. It was a small tourists' center known apparently only to cycling members of the Touring Club. The Teuton advance guard burned it, leveled its houses and wrecked its church. In the sacking of this unoffending little village the Hope of the Hohenzollerns has accomplished a completely satisfying performance. But as the tide of war surged backward Clermont was left well behind the lines. As the women of the Champagne district have edged on in the rear of their advancing troops and



German prisoner and his captor near Ablain St. Nazaire

AFTERWARD

cultivated vineyards and truck gardens while throwing themselves flat before the crackle of arriving shells, so the people of Clermont, undismayed, are rebuilding. The *rap rap* of hammers is more audible than the sullen roar of distant guns in action, tipsy walls and chimneys are being shored up and new roof trees are being trimmed to replace the old.

Just west of Clermont is the shattered town of Ste. Menehould. I retain a pleasant memory of the place because of its clean little inn, the Hotel de Metz. The town is not without historic interest. On the Avenue Victor Hugo is the posting house where Louis XVI, on his attempted flight from France in 1791, was recognized by "Old Dragoon Drouet." Ste. Menehould is on the upper reaches of the Aisne. Follow the river north through the wooded slopes and knolls of the Argonne to the lines west of Ville-sur-Tourbe. Devastation far and wide marks this territory. In the great offensive of the Battle of Champagne the *terrain* was swept clear. There are no trees, no houses, the landscape is complete desolation. It marks, however, the first substantial gain by the French over a length of front since the Marne. Running due

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

west from Ville-sur-Tourbe, the trenches circle the famous Butte de Mesnil, where fearful losses were reported during the action in September. The lines now run south of Tahure and the Butte de Souain through a weird country of chalk hills, vineyards and scraggy woodland. At Cabane they swing southwest and cross the main highway from St. Hilaire to St. Souplet before touching Auberive-sur-Suippes. This is the front of the Champagne battle, in which more troops were employed, more heavy artillery involved and more casualties reported than in any general action on the western front since the first drive on Paris.

To one who ceased to be neutral after the sinking of the *Lusitania* and whose sympathies are with the Allies, this consistent advance against the German forces is most encouraging. Before February, 1915, the German position was on the line Souain-Perthes les Hurlus-Beausejeur. After the first offensive it was forced backward through Souain-Bois Sabot-Butte de Mesnil. Since the general action of last September it has been established on the line Auberive-Cabane and in a general direction south of Tahure to a point north of Ville-sur-Tourbe.

AFTERWARD

In this great battle, however, what had been a strip of "No Man's Land" before became one vast charnel house. The Germans were pushed back varying distances from two to fourteen kilometers. There has probably never before in the history of warfare been an action on a front of approximately thirty-five kilometers that engaged such tremendous forces of men and guns and left behind such horrible devastation. Beginning on the right flank of the French lines in the buttes and ravines of the peculiar Main de Massiges, where bitter combats followed one after the other on September 26th as the Germans retired, the landscape is devoid of character. It is like a dump heap on the outskirts of some large western town. Some of the craters are fifty feet in diameter. About Perthes and the Butte de Mesnil the same conditions prevail and all the roads in the fighting zone have been completely destroyed.

After passing the left wing of the French armies during the Battle of Champagne the old lines are about the same. They sweep through the flat country near Rheims between the Vesle and the Aisne and across the one time flying field of Bétheny.

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

Many pilgrims will be attracted to Rheims when the war is over. They will go to view the damage done to one of the most beautiful Gothic edifices in Europe. The town will also make an attractive center for excursions to all the neighboring battlefields and the two hotels on either side of the *place* in front of the cathedral will undoubtedly be restored. One, the Hotel du Lion d'Or, has not been so badly damaged but what its restoration can be easily accomplished. For sentimental reasons I trust that the Grand Hotel on the other side of the *place* will be rebuilt and again throw its doors open to the motoring public.

Leaving the Rheims neighborhood to work westward along the lines we reach Berry-au-Bac. Further along is Craonne, the little town within the present German lines from which the plateau takes its name.

The Craonne Plateau, seized upon by the Germans after the great retreat, was favored as a strategical position as far back as the days of Napoleon. Conditions change sometimes over night, but when I was in the Aisne region last Summer the lines were generally further apart than in many of the other sectors. The French held the



Our Renault trapped. After the German gunners bombarded the road over which it had passed, the chauffeurs were ordered not to return across the shell-swept highway until after dusk

AFTERWARD

trenches close to the river with their batteries well placed in hidden positions some distance in the rear. The white scar of the German trenches nicked the slopes of the Craonne Plateau and their supporting artillery was usually close behind. Numerous small country roads lead in and out of the present lines. After reaching Soissons, which is a town of sufficient initiative to promptly rebuild as soon as the German menace is removed, they run for a short distance not far north of *route nationale* No. 31, a well-constructed highway that has been of the greatest service to France in transporting men and munitions through the valley.

The general line of the present trenches from the Woëvre to the Oise has been sketched and the points of interest touched upon. South of this strip is a country that will be of compelling interest after the war is over and the various actions that determined the Battle of the Marne are more clearly understood. I am no military expert. I do not presume to comprehend the general strategy that the various staffs of the different armies were forced to solve. Consideration of thrusts and assaults, of flanking movements and sudden retreats and of the innumerable technical

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

problems that were confronted by the army chiefs should be deferred until the army chiefs are at liberty to interpret them after the war is over. But as a matter of interest to the motoring reader it might be well to outline the battle positions before the great French offensive began. The general action was commenced on the line from Paris to Vitry-le-François. On the left flank of the Allied forces was Maunoury's Sixth Army and then the three British Corps under General French with a cavalry division filling the gap between its right flank and General Franchet d'Esperey's Fifth Army. General Foch's Ninth Army, which was the pivotal point of the fighting about La Fère Champenoise, took its position on d'Esperey's right with the Fourth Army under General Langle de Caryl adjoining and the Third Army on the right wing between Bar-le-Duc and St. Mihiel.

The opposing German forces from west to east were Von Kluck's First Army, with four regular corps, two in reserve and a corps of cavalry, with its right resting on the Grand Morin. Adjoining it was Von Buelow's Army, composed of the 7th and 10th Prussian Guard Corps, another in reserve and a cavalry corps. In the center was the Third

AFTERWARD

Army—the 12th and 19th Saxons—and continuing eastward the Fourth Army under Albrecht of Würtemberg, who commanded three army corps, two in reserve and a division of cavalry, and on the left wing the Fifth Army under the German Crown Prince, composed of the 5th, 13th and 16th corps, two reserve corps and a cavalry division, with its front extending from the Aisne to the Meuse above Verdun.

The most important of the battlefields include Montmirail, doubly famous since the days of Napoleon, Champeubert, Vauchamps, Mormant, La Fère Champenoise and Sézanne. Many of the smaller towns that lie within this general line were the scenes of important actions, of desperate bayonet charges and gallant infantry assaults. The French, called by the Germans a decadent race, caught on the flank by the unexpected violation of Belgium, with all their vast mobilization centered on the eastern frontier, suddenly changed front and with the help of the British and Belgians managed to reform a battle line, and after three days of defeat to turn and roll back the Prussian military machine.

Leaving the Aisne Valley north of Vic-sur-

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

Aisne, the battle lines draw closer together as they swing in a gradual curve through the Forêt de l'Aigle. They cross the Oise north of Compiègne at Ribécourt and then run north through Lassigny. This was the scene of one of the bitterest fights in the Battle of the Aisne that followed a month after the turning point at the Marne. We are now driving almost due north to Roye—a strategic position of some importance on a fertile plateau. It was strongly protected by enormous earthworks and bombshelters. The strip of “No Man’s Land” grows wider. Back of Roye to the east is St. Quentin, an old French town within the territory now held by Germany. The British retreated through St. Quentin after the fight at Mons in what has been called by experts one of the finest rearguard actions in military history.

. Another old French town, Péronne, lies on the right as one motors north. Again the intersecting roads allow easy access to the lines. For this sector the motorist may establish headquarters at Compiègne or Amiens. The stretch over the plateau between the Oise and the Somme has not appeared as frequently in the *communiqués* as some of the other sectors on the battle front. But following



Poilus back of the lines in the Artois sector waiting for dusk to take their places at the front

AFTERWARD

the Marne, actions of great importance occurred in this neighborhood as the right flank of the invading army was rolled back. On the left of Maunoury's Sixth Army suddenly appeared Castelnau with his corps from the Argonne. It had been quickly transferred to Beauvais and then brought eastward again. Three divisions of Territorials came next and then Maud'huy's Tenth Army, which had just come into action on the north. These troops had formed a new battle line with marvelous mobility. The entire British army, including baggage, artillery, arms and stores, was rushed to a new position on the Allied left wing in two hundred and twenty trains, while some 350,000 men of the French armies were transported distances varying from twenty-five to one hundred and twenty kilometers by automobile.

It was at this juncture that the intrepid Foch again distinguished himself. Leaving his Ninth Army quarters at Chalons-sur-Marne, he quickly moved to a new command on the French left wing, with general headquarters at Doullens. It was the series of actions that followed under Foch's direction that gradually drove back the enemy's line. With a liaison effected between the French left

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

wing and the new position of the British troops beyond stretching up to the Channel, the Allied forces faced the 9th and 21st reserve corps (German), the 1st Bavarians, the 11th Bavarians and in the neighborhood of Arras Marwitz's cavalry, afterward replaced by the 14th corps of reserves. In the actions that followed the Germans were bent back on the line toward Bapaume and eventually driven out of Arras.

The Germans did small damage among the towns between this front and the sea. They left Amiens unscathed. Their retreat was rapid, following the Marne, and Eu, Abbeville, Montreuil, and the other towns of Artois distant from the present lines are as beautiful as ever.

As the trenches run north they cross *route nationale* No. 32, a *chemin de communication* at Lassigny, *route nationale* No. 30 east of Roye and descend into the valley of the Somme west of Péronne. Further north is the main road from Albert to Péronne. The peculiar feature of this part of the "No Man's Land" is that no main roads parallel it from Ribécourt to Bapaume. From here to Arras *route nationale* No. 37 runs first on one side of the trenches and then on the

AFTERWARD

other. The lines perform some miraculous convolutions in the neighborhood of Arras, as my previous chapters may show. Before the war there were excellent hotels in Arras—the Hôtel du Commerce and the Hôtel de l'Univers. They were partly standing when I was there but are probably leveled to the ground by now.

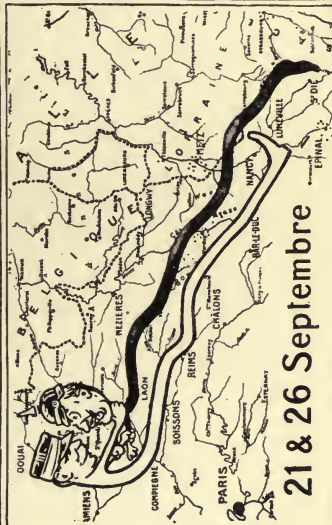
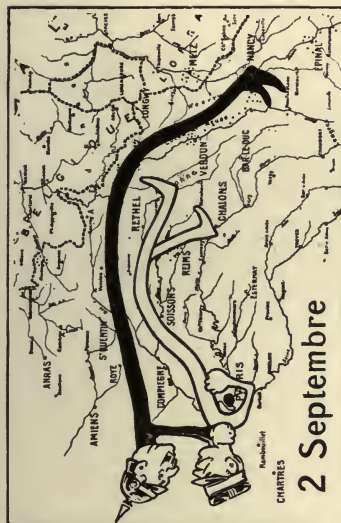
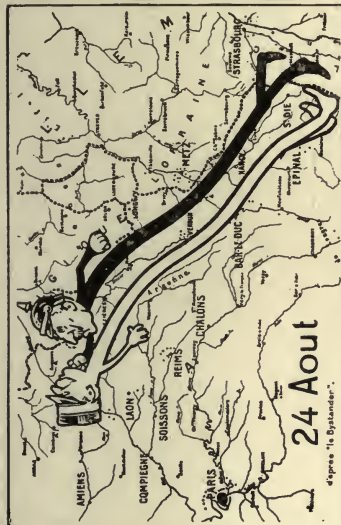
The line from Blangy to Rochincourt is practically the same as when I went through in July. From this point a perceptible gain is apparent as a result of the offensive of September 29th, 1915. The former German line Rochincourt-Neuville St. Vaast-Ablain St. Nazaire has been forced back to the line Rochincourt-Thelus-Givenchy. This is a distinct advance, since it means that the Germans have been driven out of the famous *Labyrinth* and back from the much-fought-over sugar mill at Souchez. Another consequence of the same offensive is the gain of the British forces from the line Liévin-La Bassée. The opposing troops have been driven back a distance of five kilometers through Loos. This is splendid progress in a sector where yards are gained as laboriously as in a football game at New Haven. The change greatly affects the ghastly strip of "No Man's Land" between

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

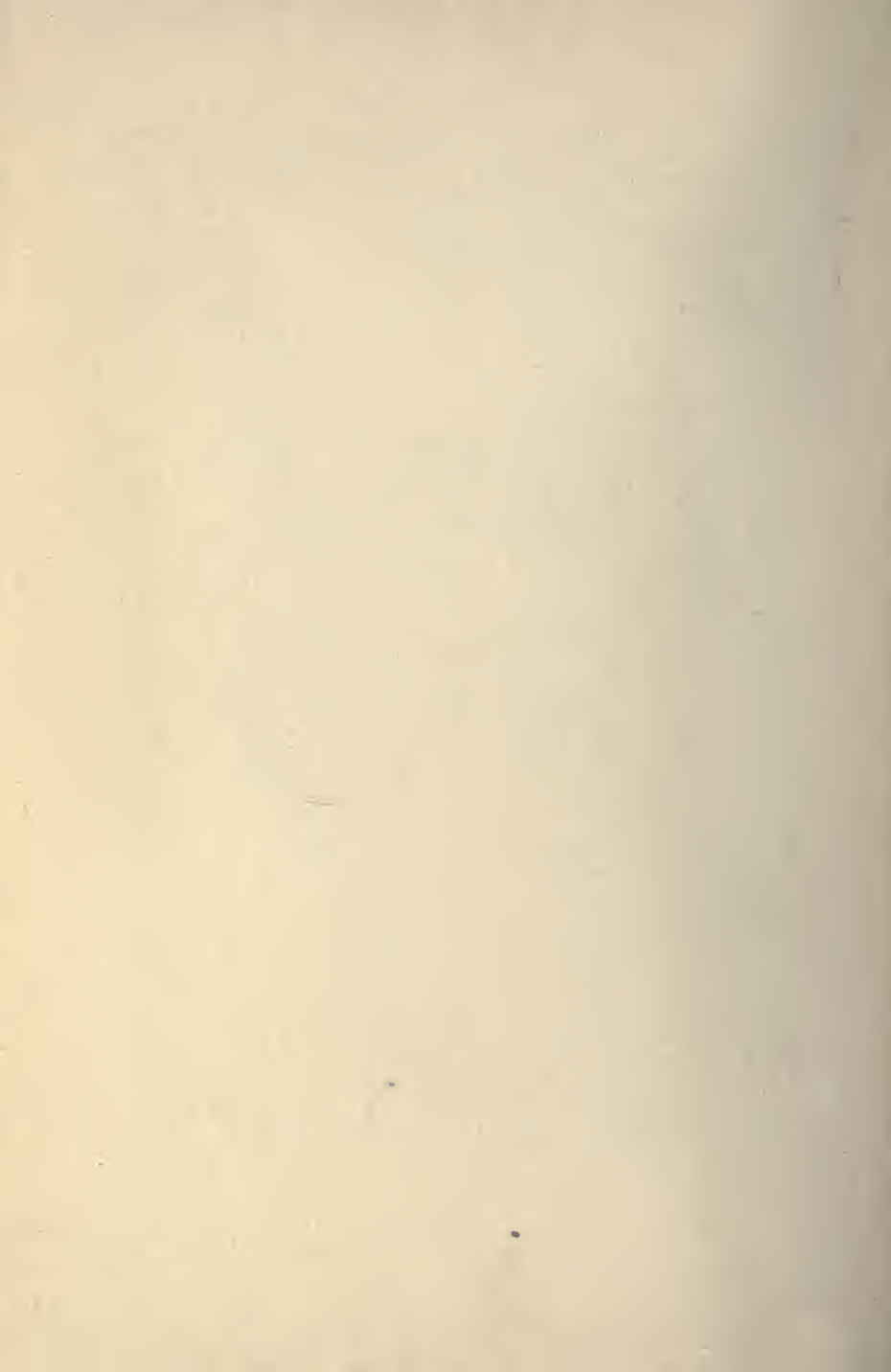
the lines that was familiar to me last Summer. The main road from Arras to Souchez and Béthune—*route nationale* No. 37—was not only *pavé* in the first place but shot to pieces as well, and the trees that bordered it were hewn off close to the ground as though by an ax. It ran through La Targette and was close to the lines when I knew it. The Germans have now been driven back of the other road from Arras to Lens as far as Vimy.

Battered Ablain St. Nazaire is now a little way outside the zone where once it was a part of it, and Souchez, so long in German hands, is now held by the French. The various "*massifs*" of Notre Dame de Lorette, first captured by General Conneau's 21st army corps—stormed on foot and taken "*à la bayonette*"—are now swept clear of the enemy.

This will be a remarkable point from which to view the battlefields of the Artois sector. It will also be easy to reach them by motor from the roads that circle about the foot of the slope. A description of this battle ground appears in a previous chapter. To make it more comprehensive I should have spoken of the towns to the north—Givenchy, Liévin, Loos, Vermelles and La Bassée. Routes



French post cards. The first two represent the great German drive on Paris; the others the gradual rolling back of the invading armies following the Battle of the Marne



AFTERWARD

from the towns now in German territory—Douai, Lille, and Lens run across the “No Man’s Land” to St. Pol, for a long time the British headquarters, and to Montreuil, Boulogne, St. Omer and Calais.

The last stretch of this strip between the trenches brings us up to the right flank of the British position where it effects a junction with the French forces between Souchez and Liévin. From here on to La Bassée is a valley of much beauty. Later the flats begin and the dykes and canals of the Yser. The British have had to hold, as the French officers considerably admit, one of the most difficult positions on the entire front. The only rising ground that could be taken advantage of for the placement of their heavy artillery is well down on their right flank. The rest of the country is as flat as a floor and is difficult to barricade or entrench in.

Varying widths separate the parapets above the trenches as one moves north from Vermelles and La Bassée. Here we are in a country that is a network of small country roads criss-crossing the main highways. It is a landscape swept clear of vegetation. To the left is Béthune, then Armentières on

BY MOTOR TO THE FIRING LINE

the Lys, the scene of so many bitter combats, and finally the lines cross into Belgium. The roads to the east lead into conquered territory, to Lille, among the towns the greatest loss the French have suffered, and to Courtrai, Ghent and Brussels. The lines then circle about Ypres, the city of the dead. I can picture nothing more incongruous than the row of spick and span new hotels that will rise up about the ruins of the Cloth Hall. The road to Dixmude is *pavé*—or rather *was pavé*. The roads across the battlefields of Flanders were not good even before the war and the motorist can imagine the condition they will be in after the war is over. The harvest of the grim reaper has been enormous in this desolate country. For over a year and a half one desperate offensive has followed another in the stubborn effort of the German armies to reach Calais, and Dixmude itself has been swept to destruction by one of the fiercest bombardments in history.

Driving on, there is the smell of the sea in the air, the road descends the left bank of the Yser. Nieuport is passed and then, between Dunkerque and Ostend, the ribbon of shell-torn earth we have followed by motor from the Vosges stretches out

AFTERWARD

into illimitable perspectives of sand dunes and shingly beaches. A wide, gray horizon sweeps across the murky waters where the strip of "No Man's Land" sinks into the Straits of Dover.

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below,
or on the date to which renewed. Renewals only:
Tel. No. 642-3405
Renewals may be made 4 days prior to date due.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

APR 6 1973 4

REC'D LO APR 3 '73 -7 PM 9

LD21A-20m-3,'73
(Q8677s10)476-A-31

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

new b
pes net

YC 28895

359933

D640
H27

Hale

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

